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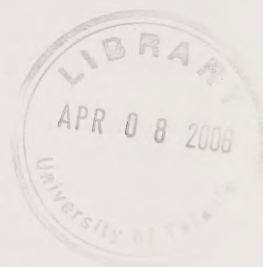
First Session, 39<sup>th</sup> Parliament

## Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

Première session, 39<sup>e</sup> législature

# Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

# Journal des débats (Hansard)



Monday 31 March 2008

Lundi 31 mars 2008

Speaker  
Honourable Steve Peters

Président  
L'honorable Steve Peters

Clerk  
Deborah Deller

Greffière  
Deborah Deller



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## LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 31 March 2008

## ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 31 mars 2008

*The House met at 1330.*

*Prayers.*

### MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

#### ONTARIO BUDGET

**Mr. Norm Miller:** The McGuinty Liberals' tax-and-spend budget is the wrong approach for Ontario's small businesses and entrepreneurs. The government found itself with \$5 billion in unplanned revenue this year. That is to say, they received \$5 billion more than they planned for in last year's budget. What did they do with that money? They went on a year-end spending spree—not very prudent, I would say, with economic storm clouds on the horizon.

A recent article in the *National Post* by Kevin Gaudet points out that Ontario's spending is increasing at unsustainable levels when economic growth is forecast to be only 0.5% this year. He goes on to say:

"Finally, there is the alarming trend by which the McGuinty government has expanded Ontario's debt. During his tenure, Mr. McGuinty has grown taxpayer-supported debt from \$148.7 billion to \$167.7 billion. That is an additional \$19-billion bill handed to future taxpayers.... Ontario taxpayers pay \$1 million an hour in interest—the equivalent of nearly a dime of every tax dollar sent to Queen's Park. This figure could jump dramatically if interest rates surge.

"The idea that a government can spend its way to prosperity has been discredited. Mr. McGuinty and his government cannot give anything to Ontarians that they don't first take from them in taxes today—or tomorrow through debt."

Another Liberal, Bob Rae, has already proven you can't spend your way to prosperity.

#### WHISTLE COMMUNITY RADIO

**Ms. Helena Jacek:** I rise today to celebrate an innovative new service in the town of Whitchurch-Stouffville within my riding of Oak Ridges–Markham. WhiStle Community Radio is an entirely new volunteer-run radio station which began broadcasting on March 14 of this year at 102.7 on the FM dial.

The name WhiStle radio is derived from Whitchurch-Stouffville and was chosen to emphasize the local nature of its programming. One of the founders of WhiStle radio

is Mrs. Sibylle Foppa, who, as a newcomer to Canada and mother of a two-month-old baby, found herself at home listening to CBC Radio daily. It was from those radio broadcasts that she discovered so much about her newly adopted country. However, she thought how even more valuable it would be to have a truly local radio station bringing community news and information to residents in its broadcast area. So WhiStle radio was born to help residents old and new enjoy their rapidly growing community. Whitchurch-Stouffville grew by nearly 5,000 people in the last decade, with similar growth anticipated over the next 10 years.

I'm especially pleased to announce that the efforts of the founders of WhiStle Community Radio have been recognized by the Ontario Trillium Foundation, which has approved a grant of \$15,000 to purchase the equipment they needed to launch their programming. I want to congratulate this band of radio pioneers for their spirit and determination.

#### ONTARIO ECONOMY

**Mrs. Julia Munro:** On Friday, I attended the central Ontario automotive sector economic symposium hosted by Nottawasaga Futures, south Simcoe county's economic development agency. Carmakers are facing major challenges in the global economy, and Canadian companies face even more challenges with a high dollar and labour costs. Many at the symposium spoke of the real risk Ontario faces, that it may lose a part of its auto industry, perhaps even a large part.

Attendees spoke about one of their key frustrations in dealing with this issue, the fact that the Ontario government has no plan or vision to help. They are waiting in vain for some sort of energy policy that will give them a safe and secure source of energy. They are very frustrated about the time it takes to get approvals of any sort from the Ontario government. And they are unhappy with Ontario's infrastructure deficit. The money the Liberals handed out in the last week of the fiscal year is a slush fund. There is no plan and no vision.

When will this government plan infrastructure spending to help business so these businesses can then create jobs and build prosperity?

#### PROPERTY TAXATION

**Mr. Michael Prue:** It would probably come as no surprise to taxpayers in the province of Ontario today to see



from all the lists in the Toronto Star that on a modest home priced at \$380,000 throughout the GTA they pay huge taxes, ranging from a low of \$2,322 a year to a high of \$5,745. It should come as no surprise to them, but what might surprise them is that Ontarians have the dubious distinction of paying the highest property taxes in the entire world. Not one other country, not one other jurisdiction, has as high property tax as we have in the province of Ontario.

This is in part due to downloading of some \$3.2 billion of provincially mandated programs, and in part it's also because there are few jurisdictions in the world where senior levels of government give less to their cities than we do here in Canada and in Ontario, and the two cents on the gas tax just doesn't cut it. The mayors asked for one cent on the GST and they didn't get it, although there was an opportunity for this government to have acted earlier this year.

Today, we see that taxes are rising throughout Ontario. This is just the tip of the iceberg. As the government well knows, come September, October and November, MPAC will come out with its new property figures, and the government had better be ready at that time, or the howls of protest will be nothing compared to what they saw in the Star today.

#### ANNIVERSARY OF GREEK INDEPENDENCE

**Ms. Sophia Aggelonitis:** I would like to take this opportunity to thank the many friends and neighbours of Hamilton Mountain who joined me on Saturday, March 29, for my first open house at the Hamilton Mountain constituency office. It was a great day and I had over 100 guests.

I would also like to add that on Sunday, March 30, I had the honour to walk in the Greek Independence Day parade with the Premier, the Minister of Education and the Minister of Labour, alongside His Eminence Archbishop Sotirios of Toronto and the president of the Greek Community of Toronto, Mr. Costas Menegakis. We were also joined by other members of this House, including Mr. Michael Prue and Mr. Peter Tabuns.

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After nearly 400 years of rule by the Ottomans, Greece declared its independence on March 25, 1821. Long before that, the ancient Greeks created a culture that valued liberty and dignity, and the modern Greeks have demonstrated that preserving freedom is a powerful motivating force. The anniversary of Independence Day is a national holiday in Greece and is a day of celebration throughout the world.

I have walked in this parade for many years. It is a day very important to my family and all Greeks across the world, both young and old, both Greek-born and Canadian-born like myself. We will never forget the great struggles for freedom and liberty. On important occasions such as this, fellow Greeks say with pride, "Zito É Ellas, Zito O Canada."

#### CITY OF LONDON

**Mr. Khalil Ramal:** I rise in this House to speak about important recent investments our government has made in the great city of London. On March 28, Minister Matthews, Minister Bentley and myself announced in London an \$11-million Innovation Industrial Park to build local roads, water mains, sanitary services and storm water management facilities.

By investing \$11 million in an industrial innovation park and \$2.5 million in Original Cakerie two weeks ago, our government is investing in Ontarians by creating hundreds of jobs. The people of London and the province of Ontario thank this government for this investment.

I would like to thank Her Worship, the mayor of London, Anne Marie DeCicco-Best; Mr. Peter White, CEO of the London Economic Development Corp.; and Mr. Jim MacKinnon, president of the building trades council for taking part in our recent announcement. As well, I would like to thank our government for its continued support and commitment by investing in London and moving Ontario forward.

#### ONTARIO BUDGET

**Mr. Bill Mauro:** Our government's 2008 budget is good news for Ontario and it's great news for my constituents in Thunder Bay–Atikokan. Our budget continues to invest in roads, bridges and community infrastructure. In fact, the McGuinty government will immediately invest almost \$9 million to repair roads, bridges and community infrastructure in my riding of Thunder Bay–Atikokan. Project totals announced in Thunder Bay–Atikokan for both the budget allocation and the MIII program include \$3 million for Thunder Bay, \$1.7 million for Atikokan, \$1.9 million for Neebing, \$1.8 million for Oliver Paipoonge, \$45,000 for O'Connor, \$35,000 for Gillies and \$52,000 for Conmee. This funding will allow communities to build, fix or expand their local infrastructure in the upcoming construction season.

This funding totals almost \$9 million for community infrastructure and will go a very long way, especially in our smaller communities with large geographic areas and small assessments and tax bases. I've had the opportunity to communicate this information to my respective mayors and reeves, such as Steve Harrasen in Neebing, Lucy Klusterhuis in Oliver Paipoonge, Ron Nelson in O'Connor, John Valente in Gillies, Bob Rydholm in Conmee, Lynn Peterson in Thunder Bay and Dennis Brown in Atikokan. They are all very excited for their municipalities.

This government is making fantastic investments in northwestern Ontario through our 2008 budget and the MIII program, and I look forward to sharing more good news with my constituents in the near future.

#### MUNICIPAL FINANCES

**Mr. Bill Murdoch:** Last week, Liberal members were busy announcing big cash falls for their ridings, calling



the money "roads and bridges funding." Six days have passed since they made these announcements and still no information on my riding's fair share of the money. In fact, no money announcements have been made in any PC member's riding. So far I've found out only about Bruce county, and this is because Bruce is partly represented by a Liberal member. The problem seems to be that this is privileged information; otherwise, how do you explain why it's only Liberal members who have this information?

For days my staff have been on the phone making calls to several different ministers and staffers, but to no avail. That includes the Ministry of Transportation, Public Infrastructure Renewal, Finance and even the Premier's office. Their staff say they don't know how much we're getting. In fact, as of 1 p.m. today, the totals have not been made available to me or other PC colleagues.

How is it possible that Liberal ridings get this money before anybody else? Where is the justice in that? I have no doubt that it's either the people in the ministers' offices who are deliberately stonewalling us, or the money is for Liberal ridings only.

This is about playing dirty, malicious politics. I find their actions arrogant, and highly hypocritical of a government that speaks so often of inclusiveness and openness. The \$400 million they announced for non-GTA municipalities should be a good-news story, a moment for them to look good to the people of Ontario. So why withhold this information? Perhaps it is for the privileged only—Liberal-held ridings—and none for the rest of us.

I know someone here has the municipal allocations for all of Ontario. I would like to ask the minister to please share the numbers with the members on this side of the House too. Break the slush fund—

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Thank you. Members' statements?

## ONTARIO BUDGET

**Mr. Jim Brownell:** Last week, the Minister of Finance delivered a budget that included a number of exciting initiatives that will be extremely beneficial to rural Ontario. I am especially proud of what this budget has in store for rural communities in eastern Ontario and my riding of Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry.

The ultimate goal of these initiatives, as it is with everything we do in rural Ontario, is to enhance opportunities for growth and support a high quality of life in our rural communities. For instance, the budget proposed to increase funding for the rural economic development program, or RED, as we call it, by \$30 million over the next four years. The budget also proposed to invest \$53 million over the next three years to add 50 more family health teams by 2011-12, which would target rural and underserved communities.

One further aspect that I especially look forward to is the development of the eastern Ontario development

fund. Led by the Ministry of Economic Development and Trade, this fund will provide support for business investment and economic development in eastern Ontario. The fund is also aimed to support initiatives in key sectors such as manufacturing, agriculture, forestry and the budding bio-economy sector.

We have seen how investments in these sectors in other parts of the province can help truly transform communities and businesses. These are the investments that this government is proud to make in partnership with those who serve in our rural communities.

## ACCESS TO INFORMATION

**Mr. Bill Murdoch:** On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: Last week, in the riding of Huron–Bruce, it was announced that there was \$18 million for all the municipalities. It's a slush fund that this government had at the end of the year. There was \$400 million to be given to all the municipalities across the province. Since then, I have not been able to find out what monies went to Grey county. It's not held by any Liberals there, and unfortunately, the Liberal ridings have this slush fund.

This is different than the MIII that was given out on Friday. We tried in our office to get somebody in one of those offices on Friday. They were all out with the ministers handing out this MIII money. We got that, but we had to go to a special website to get it.

But I want to tell you, it's either my privilege, or there's something wrong here that we do not—

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** If the honourable member—on Thursday last, the leader of Her Majesty's loyal opposition, your leader, wasn't clear if it was a point of order or a point of privilege. I took his point under advisement and I will be making a ruling and speaking on the very point that he rose upon, and which you have just risen upon. So perhaps when all the members are present here, closer to question period, you'll be able to hear my comments that will speak directly to your issue.

## REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

### STANDING COMMITTEE ON THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

**Mr. Bas Balkissoon:** I beg leave to present a report from the standing committee on the Legislative Assembly, pursuant to standing order 109(b).

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Mr. Balkissoon presents the committee's report. Does the member wish to make a brief statement?

**Mr. Bas Balkissoon:** The report is pretty straightforward. It is the assignment of ministries and government offices to stand in committees.



**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Pursuant to standing order 109(b), the report is deemed to be adopted by the House.

*Report deemed adopted.*

1350

## INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

### PAYDAY LOANS ACT, 2008

#### LOI DE 2008 CONCERNANT LES PRÊTS SUR SALAIRE

Mr. McMeekin moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 48, An Act to regulate payday loans and to make consequential amendments to other Acts / *Projet de loi 48, Loi visant à réglementer les prêts sur salaire et à apporter des modifications corrélatives à d'autres lois.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

*First reading agreed to.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** The minister for a short statement?

**Hon. Ted McMeekin:** I'll make a statement under ministerial statements.

## MOTIONS

### PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

**Hon. David Caplan:** I believe we have unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding private members' public business.

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Agreed? Agreed.

**Hon. David Caplan:** I move that, notwithstanding standing order 96(d), the following changes be made to the ballot list of private members' public business:

That Mr. Bailey and Mr. Hillier exchange places in order of precedence such that Mr. Bailey assumes ballot item 63 and Mr. Hillier assumes ballot item 14; that Mr. Mauro, Mr. Zimmer, Mr. Oraziotti, Mr. Moridi, Mrs. Mitchell and Ms. Aggelonitis exchange places in order of precedence such that Mr. Mauro assumes ballot item 43, Mr. Zimmer assumes ballot item 36, Mr. Oraziotti assumes ballot item 21, Mr. Moridi assumes ballot item 12, Mrs. Mitchell assumes ballot item 10 and Ms. Aggelonitis assumes ballot 9; and that, notwithstanding standing order 96(g), the requirement for notice be waived with respect to ballot items 9 through 14.

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

*Agreed to.*

## STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

### CONSUMER PROTECTION

**Hon. Ted McMeekin:** I'm pleased to stand in my place today and to introduce our proposed Payday Loans Act, 2008. This legislation, if passed, would provide a fair and balanced approach to regulating the payday lending industry in Ontario. It would protect thousands of Ontarians who, from time to time, rely on payday loans to help them through a short-term financial squeeze.

We recognized early in our first mandate that consumers needed more knowledge and clear information about payday loans to help them make better borrowing decisions. We were one of the first provinces to urge the federal government to regulate payday lenders and their business practices.

Last spring, the federal government enacted Bill C-26, amending the Criminal Code, and in so doing shifted responsibility to the provinces to regulate the total cost of borrowing for payday loan agreements.

Our government held consultations last summer to gain needed insight from consumers and lending officials on the direction Ontario should take in this matter. And in August 2007, we made it law for payday lenders to prominently display the terms of any loan on signs in their stores. We also required lenders to explain to customers exactly what the total costs involved in these types of loans would be. That was the first step, and today we begin a second, significant step.

I would like to highlight some of the initiatives in our proposed plan to regulate approximately 700 payday lending outlets in Ontario.

First, it would create a licensing regime for payday lenders to ensure fairness in the provision of payday loans. Licensing payday lenders would immediately provide all users of payday loans with the same strengthened protection.

Second, it would ban a variety of harmful practices that currently exist in the industry. Under this proposed act, payday lenders would be prohibited from making concurrent and back-to-back loans. These are the so-called rollover loans where a borrower takes a loan on a loan and is saddled with exorbitant interest rates and a damaging cycle of debt horror stories. We won't allow that to happen. We also will not allow payday lenders to impose unreasonable default charges or cancellation fees.

Third, the legislation would aim to educate the public, providing consumers with information they need to protect themselves and make more informed choices. The lenders themselves would pay for this with the establishment of an educational fund for financial planning.

In our 2007 throne speech, we committed to begin the long, hard process of addressing poverty in Ontario. We cannot, and will not, allow people to take further advantage of the most economically vulnerable consumers in our society. So under the proposed legislation, we would



set a maximum total-cost-of-borrowing cap to limit the amount payday lenders can charge. There will be no hidden fees. All charges to the borrower must be included in the cost of borrowing.

This spring, we will set up an independent expert advisory board to recommend what an appropriate upper limit would be to the total cost of borrowing for payday loan agreements in Ontario. Board members will be drawn from the business community, the social and poverty advocacy sector, and the academic world. The board will consult for input before recommending an upper limit on the total cost of borrowing for various payday loan agreements. That will be our next step, our third step, in protecting Ontario consumers.

That, however, will not end our work. The ministry's consumer protection branch will conduct inspections, investigations, respond to consumer complaints and may impose administrative monetary penalties for non-compliance.

The proposed Payday Loans Act, 2008, provides that licences may be revoked or suspended in specified circumstances, including if a licensee contravenes the legislation.

Ontario has led the country in looking at specific provisions and protections for consumers who use payday loans, and we will continue to lead the country with our good work.

If this legislation passes, we will have the strongest payday lending rules in the country. The cost of payday loans will be clear and more easily understood, and we'll begin a process to actually provide a cap, or caps, on the total cost of borrowing.

If passed, this legislation would deliver real and positive changes and increase public confidence in the integrity of this industry as we continue to protect Ontario consumers and their families. And that has to be good news for all of us.

1400

## MUNICIPAL INFRASTRUCTURE

**Hon. David Caplan:** I'm very proud to rise today in the Legislature to share with my colleagues about yet another significant step that our government has taken to revitalize, to renew, and to restore vital local infrastructure in communities right across Ontario. Since taking office more than four years ago, this government has been unwavering in its commitment to eliminate the massive infrastructure deficit that we inherited.

My friends on both sides of the aisle may remember that back in December we launched something called the municipal infrastructure investment initiative, which I tend to call just MIII. MIII started as a \$300-million grant program to be used by municipalities on the local infrastructure projects of particular importance to the people in their local communities.

Several weeks later, as we all know, Premier McGuinty announced that the government would be adding an additional \$150 million to the investment, bringing the

total funding amount to \$450 million and ensuring that as many communities as possible might be able to benefit. That is a total of \$450 million that we are making available for projects like building safer roads and bridges, improving waste management systems, ensuring cleaner water, and upgrading sports, recreation and community centres.

I'm delighted to tell this House that just last week we released the names of the 243 municipalities and local service boards that will be receiving funding under the program. Whatever projects are being funded—and the specific infrastructure needs in these communities are as unique, I would say, as the communities themselves—we know that they are of critical importance to the people who live there. So I'm proud to say today that these projects are expected to lead to some 6,700 new construction jobs right across the province.

Initiatives like MIII are part of a comprehensive, overall plan for infrastructure renewal that we have put in place to compensate for years of neglect by previous governments.

It builds on the success of our historic \$30-billion-plus ReNew Ontario infrastructure investment strategy, which represents the biggest investment in infrastructure in more than a generation.

And last Tuesday, in this very chamber, my colleague the Minister of Finance tabled the fifth McGuinty government budget, which contained, among other excellent initiatives, \$1 billion in new funding for municipal infrastructure in 2007-08. That includes \$400 million for the municipal roads and bridges fund for communities outside of Toronto, \$497 million for public transit in the greater Toronto area and Hamilton, and \$100 million to rehabilitate existing social housing units. These investments will create an estimated 10,000 jobs during construction.

I am very proud and delighted to say on behalf of this government that we've made and will continue to make desperately needed investments in the schools, in the hospitals, in the roads and bridges, in the clean water and other public infrastructures which Ontarians deserve and on which they depend.

## VISITORS

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Before we turn to responses, I would just like to ask all members to welcome today in the Speaker's gallery a delegation from the Scottish Parliament led by Mr. Alex Fergusson, the presiding officer. Please join me in warmly welcoming the delegation to Ontario from Scotland. Welcome.

## CONSUMER PROTECTION

**Mr. Frank Klees:** I'm pleased to respond to the Minister of Government and Consumer Services. On behalf of the official opposition, I want to commend the minister for bringing forward this legislation. I know that



he did so after consultation with the industry as well as the public.

We in this House have been calling for this kind of legislation from both sides of the House for a number of years. I want to recognize the member for Welland, who I believe was the first member to bring forward a private member's bill to deal with this issue. There is no question that we have a responsibility in this Legislature to bring forward legislation that protects the consumer. That is his role as the minister. It is our role as a Legislature to ensure that when people do make financial transactions, they are protected.

I would suggest, however, that we give consideration to changing the terminology that we're using, even that the minister has used; and that is, to limit the cost of borrowing. I would suggest that the real issue is the cost of lending, and that's what we should be limiting. I understand that essentially it's the same, but the obligation is on the part of the lender to ensure that the lending practices in this province are fair and that they are not abusive to the very people who are in need.

I would ask the minister as well to ensure, as he considers the various stages of bringing this legislation forward, that he give consideration and allow us, as the members of the Legislature and the public, to come forward through public hearings to not only deal with the legislation here but also to point out that there is a need to expand this kind of consumer protection.

I have an example in my own riding of Newmarket-Aurora, where individuals within the professional community—in this particular case, it happens to be a lawyer who is dealing with mortgages. Consumers who are in financial stress are remortgaging their homes, and those who are engaging in this practice are allowing mortgages to be rolled over and rolled over to the point where people are actually forced, at the end of the day, to sell their homes to the very lawyer who's involved in mortgaging their properties, and are found to be homeless as a result of that. These are things that we, as legislators, have a responsibility to deal with, and I look forward to having the opportunity to expose people like this, who should be standing up for and protecting consumers, and they're taking advantage of them.

So with regard to this legislation, I would also say that we will work with the minister to ensure that what we do is more than just bureaucracy that deals with this issue, that they are meaningful measures that in fact will address the issue.

#### MUNICIPAL INFRASTRUCTURE

**Mr. Frank Klees:** I want to address the announcement made by the Minister for Public Infrastructure Renewal. The member for Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound earlier made the comment that what we should be doing on the issues of infrastructure funding is dealing with these matters as matters of priority importance, not as matters of partisan slush funds.

While we welcome all investments in infrastructure, we would ask that we do so on a non-partisan basis, that all members in this Legislature—be they members of the government or members of the official opposition or the third party—have the co-operation of the minister that when announcements are being made, when in fact there is a designation of funding and an allocation of funding for infrastructure, all members are invited to participate in that; that we all receive that information in a timely way; that infrastructure is not used by this government as a slush fund but used in a respectful way, so that we can all participate in those announcements and work to ensure that the funding is designated for the purpose intended.

We welcome these announcements, but what we ask this government to do is to be conscious of its responsibility towards all members in this House when announcements like this are made.

#### CONSUMER PROTECTION

**Ms. Andrea Horwath:** I want first to respond to the Minister of Government and Consumer Services in regards to the payday loans announcement that he's just made. I have to say that it's certainly about time that there's been some movement on this issue here in the Ontario Legislature. I think the previous responder mentioned that it was an NDP member in this Legislature, Mr. Peter Kormos from Welland, who first raised this issue. He was very diligent in trying to get this issue on the agenda because he knows, like everyone else, that the system of payday loans in this province is nothing but usury. The bottom line is that it's our most vulnerable people, and oftentimes vulnerable communities, that are plagued with this nightmare of payday loan organizations that continue to drive people deeper and deeper into poverty. It's absolutely unacceptable.

1410

Members of this Legislature will also know that just recently, in the last session, the member from Parkdale-High Park, Cheri DiNovo, also put a private member's bill in place to try to deal with his horrific situation of payday loans here in Ontario.

As I looked through the bill and listened to the minister's words, the reality is that there are major pieces to the solution that are not being delineated in any clear way. I speak specifically to putting a hard cap on the percentage that's allowed to be charged on the payday loans, and unfortunately that's not in here, and I'm quite concerned that it's not. There very clearly have been recommendations through the process that indicate the cap should be no more than about 35%, that we should cap the interest rates at 35% and that that would be a fair regime to put in place in this regard.

I also noted in the bill, as I was quickly looking through it, that although recommendations are for a 30-day cooling-off period upon entering into one of these loans, all that this government is putting forward is a mere two-day, 48-hour cooling-off period or attempt to



let people have an opportunity to change their minds if they realize they've gotten into a situation that really is not to their benefit financially. That's just not acceptable. If we want to have a true and balanced approach, as the minister indicates, then we need to look at a much longer cooling-off period than a mere two days, after which someone signs away their life in terms of being committed to these kinds of payments and high interest rates.

I look forward to going through the process with this minister to really put into place some teeth that change the regime of payday loans in this province so that the most vulnerable in our communities don't continue to be gouged by these usurious organizations.

### MUNICIPAL INFRASTRUCTURE

**Ms. Andrea Horwath:** I now would like to take a couple of minutes to respond to the Minister of Infrastructure Renewal and indicate that it is unacceptable in Ontario that we have a minister claiming that a measly injection of capital dollars that he announces today, and has been announcing for the last couple of weeks, is enough. Everybody knows that the infrastructure deficit in this province is huge; it's over \$65 billion. Some \$1 billion is a pittance. It's like sending a child with a water toy into a three-alarm fire to try to address the problem. It's unacceptable.

Municipalities in this province need and deserve real programs that are long-term, sustainable and ones that municipalities can use to plan their capital programs into the future—not some one-off, one-time drop-in-the-bucket couple of dollars, not some one-off that's reliant upon whether or not the government happens to be running a surplus in any given year. How shameful is that? Let's not build in a permanent program for municipalities. Let's not do that. Let's say, "If we happen to be frugal and have a bigger surplus than what we had planned, then maybe we'll be able to spread around a little bit of cash." That is unacceptable. Municipalities have been starved for a long time for real capital programs that are sustainable and that are able to be used as a proper planning tool.

In the meantime, municipalities are crumbling. We see water main breaks constantly. We see roads and bridges that are close to collapse. In a province like Ontario, how do you expect to have a decent economy if the very pieces of that economic infrastructure, like our roads and our bridges, are falling apart? It is absolutely unacceptable. The reality is that, just to try to keep up with infrastructure demands, municipal budgets have been bursting at the seams. Yes, as one of my colleagues mentioned during members' statements, the reality of down-loading has been very troublesome, and what has happened, because there have been no dollars in municipal budgets, is that they've had to rely on operating dollars to put into the capital programs that should have been funded in partnership with this province for many, many

years. It's unacceptable that this drop in a bucket is all that is being provided.

### VISITORS

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** There are a few individuals we would like the House to recognize, please.

On behalf of the member from London North Centre, I'd like to welcome David Simmonds from the Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance. Welcome today, Mr. Simmonds.

On behalf of the competing Ministers of Public Infrastructure Renewal and Labour, and trying to decide which riding the page Christopher Dimoff is here from, we would like to welcome Tom, Kathy, and Zoe Dimoff here to visit Christopher Dimoff from the riding of Scarborough Centre. Welcome today.

On behalf of the member from Lambton-Kent-Middlesex, I'll recognize some guests of page Samuel Kloppenburg from Arva: his parents Marnie and Davie, his sisters Sophie and Lyla, and friend Greg. Welcome to the Legislature today.

On behalf of the member from London North Centre, I'd like to welcome Menina Casalino, a grade 8 student from Villanova College, and her teacher, Rosalie Naworynski, who are in the gallery today as part of a job-shadowing opportunity won at the Youth in Motion and women in politics conference.

The member from Simcoe-Grey would like to welcome guests from the Canadian Federation of Students: Jen Hassum, Hildah Otieno, Toby Whitfield, Nora Loreto and Ken Marciniec. Welcome to the Legislature today.

I'd like all members to recognize the member from Hamilton Mountain, as she celebrates her 40th birthday today. Happy birthday, Sophia.

### *Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Okay, 29. We can't say that she's 16, because she wouldn't be eligible to be sitting in this chamber.

### ACCESS TO INFORMATION

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** On Thursday, March 27, the leader of the official opposition, Mr. Runciman, rose in the House with respect to the announcements he said were being made by government members in their ridings concerning monies made available in the budget through the municipal roads and bridges fund. The leader of the opposition complained that the information about this funding was being provided to government members only.

The member acknowledged that he was not certain if this was a point of privilege, and indeed I can confirm that it is not. As I mentioned in a ruling delivered earlier last week, the privileges that members of this House enjoy are very narrow, and they relate exclusively to members' parliamentary duties in this chamber. The fact of government announcements being made or infor-



mation not being shared with opposition members does not give rise to a question of privilege.

Numerous Speakers have addressed similar complaints on numerous occasions. In October 1997, the Speaker ruled on a similar point of privilege, in which an opposition member had not received government information at the same time that government members, certain municipal officials and even the press had received it. I will quote Speaker Stockwell from his October 9, 1997, ruling, because I think it was extremely well said at the time and applies as strongly today as it did on that occasion in 1997:

"I appreciate that the member would have preferred that all members could have received the information at the same time. However, the Speaker cannot require the government to release such information—or to release it at a certain time. There is nothing in our rules or our practices that would permit a Speaker to control the dissemination of that kind of information. It is clear from any number of previous Speakers' rulings that these types of situations do not amount to a *prima facie* case of privilege."

I will reiterate former Speaker Stockwell's point: "Let me make this point, however. In a written submission to me on the matter, the government House leader"—this was the government House leader at the time—"acknowledged that a more coordinated distribution of the information in question would have been desirable. I agree, and to quote a previous Speaker, these kinds of administrative discourtesies do give rise to 'a valid grievance of which the government should take serious note.' I am certain that, in future, every care will be taken to prevent a recurrence of situations similar to the one on which I have just ruled."

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As I said, these types of grievances have been raised on all too many occasions. While the Speaker has no direct authority to solve this matter, as the servant of all members of this House, regardless of which side they sit on, I feel an obligation, like so many of my predecessors, to express disapproval of this kind of activity. Every member of this assembly is elected by his or her constituents to represent their interests, and each member, it seems to me, should have access to the same governmental resources in fulfilling those duties. I echo Speaker Stockwell and many other Speakers who have expressed antipathy at the unequal treatment of members based on partisan lines.

To finish this ruling, I would like to remind the members that the standing orders require at least one hour's written notice to me of their intention to raise a point of privilege. In raising this matter, the Leader of the Opposition expressed some uncertainty as to how his complaint should properly be raised, and so I allowed him to proceed and, furthermore, decided to take his point under advisement. However, I simply want to indicate to members that I would not expect to do so in the future.

I thank the member for raising the point.

**Mr. Bill Murdoch:** On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: It has been six days since they released their information and we still don't have it. Maybe you could ask them to give it to some of the rest of us.

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** I thank the member for his point. I believe I delivered a message on behalf of all members in this House that I hope was clearly delivered that those government members and those ministries will ensure that that information is distributed.

## ORAL QUESTIONS

### TIRE DISPOSAL

**Mr. Robert W. Runciman:** Speaker, thank you for your ruling and your helpful comments.

My question is for the Deputy Premier. Last Friday, the government announced a new tax on the purchase of tires. That was three days after the budget, a day the House was not sitting. The budget, of course, made absolutely no reference to a new tax.

Minister, why wasn't this new tax disclosed in last week's budget? Why weren't you up front with the members of this House and, more importantly, with the people of Ontario?

**Hon. George Smitherman:** Mr. Speaker, to the Minister of the Environment.

**Hon. John Gerretsen:** As the member well knows, we have an organization called the Waste Diversion Organization in Ontario. They are mandated on the direction of the minister to come up with different programs for recycling purposes. One of those programs happened to be the electronic waste program, which I received today, as a matter of fact. We are going to take a look at that program and deal with the issues contained therein as best we can.

We all know that it's good for us to recycle, and we all know it's a heck of a lot better to reuse material as well. It's simply unacceptable for those kinds of materials that the Waste Diversion Organization has been mandated with to continue to fill our landfill sites. It's simply not environmentally the right thing to do.

**Mr. Robert W. Runciman:** That response falls under the heading of bafflegab. I asked a specific question with relation to a brand new tax that was announced when the House wasn't sitting and three days after a budget was delivered in this House. Promises were made by your leader, the Premier of Ontario, that no new taxes would be forthcoming with this government, yet three days after the budget was tabled, we had this in-the-dark-of-night and behind-the-curtains kind of approach of this government to break yet another promise.

I am asking you for justification. Why was this tax not revealed during the tabling of the debate, and why have you broken yet another promise?

**Hon. John Gerretsen:** First of all, there was no tax announced. Under the Waste Diversion Act, programs



are developed by Waste Diversion Ontario. Any funding that is required for that, whether it comes from the producer, the retailer or the individual consumers, will go into that organization—their stewardship funds—to make sure those recycling programs will work.

We have received the program today. It will be posted on the EBR for the next 30 days, and after that a decision will be made whether or not to go forward with the program. But it will not be a tax. It will be based on greater, extended producer responsibility.

If the member doesn't agree that it's a good thing to keep a lot of this material out of our landfill sites, he should stand up and say so. We know where that party opposite stands with respect to the environment. We suffered for eight years under that government.

**Mr. Robert W. Runciman:** I guess it depends on how you define "tax." Is that like, "I didn't have sex with that woman"?

Let's get down to brass tacks are. Are you talking about an additional cost, that when someone goes out and purchases a tire, an additional \$4 or \$5 is going to be assessed to that purchaser? We're talking about small businesses, people in the transportation business, especially today, when we're looking at gasoline taxes and high insurance rates—the challenges they're all facing in the business sector in this province today. Are you suggesting to us that this is not the kind of allocation that you're going to impose on the people of Ontario, especially small business people? Also, are the average Joe and Jane Citizen who are facing real pressures out there, whether it is gasoline prices or mortgage payments, not going to be faced with this additional what we would call tax?

**Hon. John Gerretsen:** First of all, let's be quite clear. We know where that party stood when they were in government. They decimated the Ministry of the Environment. The number of employees, water inspectors and other environmental inspectors went from 2,300 people to about 1,150. They simply didn't care about the environment. We on this side of the House do.

With respect to the tire program, we are just entering into discussions with WDO with the request for them to develop a tire program as well. It probably will be at least another three to four months before they come back to us with a program.

As he should know, if you look at the Waste Diversion Act, which was passed in 2002, it specifically states that any payments made under that act will not go into the consolidated funds for the province of Ontario but into an extra-special stewardship program to make sure the recycling of those items is handled in a proper way. That's the way to go about it.

**Mr. Robert W. Runciman:** It sounds like a Liberal cash grab to me, Speaker.

#### GOVERNMENT SPENDING

**Mr. Robert W. Runciman:** My question again is for the Deputy Premier, and it has to do with the release of

the sunshine list today. Given that Ontario is entering an economic slowdown, and according to some economists is already in recession, Deputy Premier, do you think it's appropriate that your government has been the folks in charge over the past four years or so and that last year we saw a 27% increase in the number of staff getting salaries in excess of \$100,000, and over the life of your government a 110% increase in that number?

**Hon. George Smitherman:** Indeed, I think many people would find that the steps we took to add transparency were to bring those you had excluded on to the list to eliminate substantially the practice you liked to champion, which was not to hire staff but contractors. We're much more transparent.

What I found most interesting in looking at it is that, if the \$100,000 figure had originally been inflation-protected, two thirds of all of those individuals who are on the list now wouldn't be on the list at all. You do see some growth in the numbers that are reflective of the advance in salaries, but two thirds of those individuals wouldn't be on the list at all. Ontario has the lowest per capita ratios of civil servants of any jurisdiction in the country. I think this reflects on the efficiency overall of the government service we deliver.

In supplementary, I'll be happy to speak more to the points the honourable member might wish to raise.

**Mr. Robert W. Runciman:** I appreciate the Deputy Premier's speaking on that issue. We know they frequently boast about the creation of 400,000 new jobs over the life of their government in the past four years. We know from statistics that over 50% of those jobs have been in the public sector. We know that is a challenge in terms of who pays those salaries. We know we're entering into a slowdown in the economy, if not a recession. I ask you again about the justification for that: Given the tenor of the times, if you will, the challenges we're all facing, certainly in the province of Ontario, is this appropriate when we have these kinds of dramatic increases in salaries of public sector employees?

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**Hon. George Smitherman:** The honourable member likes to use language like "dramatic increases in salaries of public employees," but as he gets an opportunity to better evaluate the data that came out, there's very little evidence of that beyond the pressures of inflation, as I mentioned. Two thirds of all of those who are on the list wouldn't even be on the list if the \$100,000 figure, brought in about 11 or 12 years ago, had had inflation protection. So I think it's important that the honourable member deal fairly with this question.

But we also know—because last week his leader referred to many of these individuals as "exhaust suckers"—that they have a very different view than we do about the necessity of having a public service that's able to build the programming that the people in the province of Ontario expect. We know that the honourable member doesn't support having a chief water inspector on the list; that they wouldn't have any support for a senior nursing consultant or for a director of secondary



school policies and programs. But we understand, associated with our obligations to enhance the performance of the public sector, the necessity of having quality leadership, and we stand to differ from the honourable member on this point. The only place he wants jobs is in Brockville.

**Mr. Robert W. Runciman:** This is the last time I'll speak to the minister, I guess. This is, like Yogi Berra would say, "déjà vu all over again." Those of us who were around during the Peterson years know what approach that government took in terms of taxing and spending and growing the bureaucracy and leading this province into a recession, which the NDP had to deal with—inappropriately, but they did have to deal with a situation created by a Liberal government. This strikes us as an approach going down the same road.

The minister got on his high horse, as he frequently does, but he didn't respond to the specific question that I asked him. I talked about the limited creation of new jobs in this province, which they boast about, but it's very limited—over 50% of them in the public sector; not something to crow about. I said, "Is that appropriate?" Is it appropriate, given the slowdown in the economy and the clear possibility that we're currently in recession, that you're not only bloating the bureaucracy, but you're also increasing salaries at a rate that—

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Thank you. Minister?

**Hon. George Smitherman:** We know that the honourable member's druthers are clear. He'd like to be cutting \$5 billion from Ontario's investment capacity, which means nurses and police officers. We've seen that play before. We don't want them back, and the people of Ontario don't, either.

He also spoke about private sector employment. Today, the Premier, the Minister of Finance and the Minister of Economic Development are in Windsor, where 300 Windsor jobs have been secured through a very strategic investment on the part of our government. We had a letter in response to our budget from Weyerhaeuser, related to their operations in Kenora, where they said, "Along with the accelerated reduction in the business education tax, for northern businesses, it will make a significant contribution to the competitiveness of our sector." And we saw in Guelph, at Collins and Aikman, that 350 jobs have been secured beyond the date where it had been anticipated that people would be laid off.

We do see investment across the province of Ontario, and indeed, hiring more nurses is very much part of our platform. But we're not surprised that the party that called them hula hoop workers and threw them out on the lines are against that.

#### LOW-INCOME ONTARIANS

**Mr. Howard Hampton:** My question is for the Minister of Children and Youth Services. In last week's budget, the McGuinty government shovelled \$6.3 billion of new spending out the door and at the same time

largely forgot about the lowest-income Ontarians. The Premier used to say that clawing back the national child benefit supplement from the lowest-income kids in Ontario was immoral and wrong. The Premier used to say that he was going to end it. So my question is this: While the McGuinty government could find the money to shovel \$6.3 billion in new spending out the door, why is the McGuinty government continuing to claw back \$250 million a year from the lowest-income kids in Ontario?

**Hon. Deborah Matthews:** Thank you for the question. I think it's important that everyone here understands that the clawback of the national child benefit supplement will end this July. The Ontario child benefit was announced in last year's budget, as you know. Last year, every family received up to \$250 per child. This year, it'll be up to \$600 per child. It's a big help for those who are struggling to make ends meet with their children.

I think this is a big step forward for children living in poverty in this province. I sure do wish that the leader of the third party would recognize the support provided to children in low-income families.

**Mr. Howard Hampton:** I want to be very clear with the McGuinty government: New Democrats would never support a government that puts \$6.3 billion out the door in new spending while you continue to take \$250 million a year from the poorest kids in Ontario.

But it's not just the poorest kids in Ontario; it's also the lowest-paid workers in Ontario. The McGuinty government says that the lowest-paid workers in Ontario, who work for incomes below the poverty line, will have to wait another three years before they get to \$10 an hour. New Democrats believe the minimum wage should be \$10 an hour now, rising to \$11 an hour by 2011.

Can the McGuinty government tell us, at a time when you can put \$6.3 billion of new spending out the door, why the lowest-paid Ontarians are going to wait until 2011 to get \$10 an hour?

**Hon. Deborah Matthews:** I refer this—

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** I'd just like to ask the honourable member—I'm having a very difficult time understanding how the initial question dealt with the child tax benefit and the repeal of that, and now the question has shifted to the minimum wage.

**Mr. Howard Hampton:** It's all about the lowest-income Ontarians, Speaker. Most of them are children. Many of them are parents who are working. They're not getting a benefit one way or another. It's all about the lowest-income Ontarians.

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Minister of Children and Youth Services.

**Hon. Deborah Matthews:** To the Minister of Labour.

**Hon. Brad Duguid:** Actually, I do appreciate the opportunity today to say to all members of this House that I'm very proud of the fact that, as of midnight tonight, the minimum wage across this province will go up from \$8 an hour to \$8.75 an hour. After zero increases over the last nine years, I'm absolutely proud to say that this government has raised the minimum wage every single



year we've been in office. It's up 28%; by 2010, it'll be up 50%.

We've taken the minimum wage in this province from the bottom of the barrel in Canada to the top. We're leading the country when it comes to the minimum wage, but unlike the NDP's reckless suggestion that we should be doing it all at once, we're giving our business community the time to adjust so we don't hurt the very people—

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Thank you. Final supplementary?

**Mr. Howard Hampton:** I think we heard the McGuinty government's truth in the last part, that it would hurt people to raise the minimum wage. I think that's the true position of the McGuinty government.

I also want to ask about the other aspect of poverty: It's called housing. In the McGuinty government's Ontario, Ontarians have to wait up to 15 years to have access to affordable housing. It's the New Democrats' position that every penny of the federal government's \$312-million affordable housing fund, as well as the additional \$80 million off-reserve aboriginal affordable housing money, should be spent in the coming fiscal year. Can the McGuinty government tell us, why isn't that going to happen? Why isn't the full \$400 million going to be spent in the coming fiscal year for housing for the people who need it the most?

**Hon. Brad Duguid:** I'd refer this to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

**Hon. Jim Watson:** Let me just quote my critic from the NDP. When we announced \$100 million going into affordable housing projects and retrofit in the province of Ontario, the critic for the NDP called it a "meagre \$100 million." Now where I come from, \$100 million is a lot of money. The vichyssoise socialists over there may not think that is a lot of money, but I can tell you it has been extremely well received.

And guess what? When the NDP were out campaigning, they committed that they would allocate from their platform \$30 million a year to begin clearing up this backlog in Toronto. What did the McGuinty government deliver? Thirty-six million dollars to support affordable housing in this city.

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**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Stop the clock. I allowed the minister to finish his question, but one of the things that concerns me are comments that get made in this House that I think from the opposition side can be taken the wrong way. I don't think his comment about a cold product was appropriate, and I would ask that he withdraw that comment, please.

**Hon. Jim Watson:** Withdrawn.

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** New question.

#### LOW-INCOME ONTARIANS

**Mr. Howard Hampton:** My question again is for the minister for children's services. I think we heard that the federal money available for affordable housing isn't going to go to affordable housing under the McGuinty gov-

ernment. But tomorrow Ontario MPPs are getting their third pay hike in 16 months. That amounts to a 35% pay increase in just over one year. My question is this: How does the McGuinty government justify a 35% pay increase for MPPs over a short time while you continue to claw back the national child benefit from the lowest-income kids in Ontario?

**Hon. Deborah Matthews:** Again, let me repeat: The clawback of the national child benefit will be finished this July. Starting this July people on social assistance with children will receive their social assistance cheque, the full national child benefit cheque and the new Ontario child benefit cheque. The beauty of the Ontario child benefit is that when someone makes the leap, when they move from social assistance into employment, they continue to receive the full Ontario child benefit until their income reaches such a point that they no longer qualify. It is a much better situation than what we inherited, and I'm very proud of the Ontario child benefit.

**Mr. Howard Hampton:** The McGuinty government can repeat that response all it wants. It knows that its own tables, which were released last summer, show that the McGuinty government is going to continue to claw back money from the lowest-income kids through the national child benefit supplement for the next three years. Your own tables show that.

But I want to further ask about those lowest-income kids. They're going to continue to see the national child benefit clawed back from them, and their parents are being told to wait a further three years before they can be paid \$10 an hour. On the one hand you're going to claw back, and on the other hand you're going to say to their low-income parents, "You wait to even get a decent wage." Can you tell us, at the same time that you had \$6.3 billion in new spending to shovel out the door, how any of that makes sense for the lowest-income Ontarians?

**Hon. Deborah Matthews:** To the Minister of Labour once again.

**Hon. Brad Duguid:** I suppose the leader of the third party didn't listen to the original answer to his original question, because I just said that the minimum wage in this province is going up from \$8 to \$8.75 an hour as of midnight today. But listen to this: The minimum wage never went up in this province for the nine years prior to this government taking office. Every year since we've been in office that minimum wage has gone up. By 2010 it will be up 50%. Today it's up 28% since we've taken office.

The NDP want to put those people out of work. We care about low-income workers. We care about the vulnerable. They only care about attempting to get a really good sound bite. That's not what we're about. We're about improving poverty in this province. We're about helping the vulnerable. We're about getting that minimum wage up in a reasonable and balanced way so we protect the jobs of those individuals and at the same time give them a hand up.

**Mr. Howard Hampton:** The minister might want to check, but in places like Washington, Oregon and in sev-



eral urban jurisdictions in the United States, the minimum wage is over \$10 an hour. The minimum wage in Great Britain is, in equivalent, over \$10 an hour. For the minister to say that raising the minimum wage to \$10 an hour would put people out of work shows, I think, exactly where the McGuinty government is.

But I want to ask this: You had no trouble increasing the wage of the highest-paid civil servant to \$2.2 million. You now have over 42,000 people in the civil service being paid over \$100,000 a year. You have no trouble raising their wages. Why do the lowest-income Ontarians have to wait three more years just to get \$10 an hour under the McGuinty government?

**Hon. Brad Duguid:** I'll refer this one back to the Deputy Premier.

**Hon. George Smitherman:** As the Minister of Labour has had the chance to mention, the increase in the minimum wage is an increase this year of nearly 10%, 9.3%. It reflects a commitment; it's the fifth time in a row that our government has done that, and that record stands in sharp contrast and in positive contrast to that of the parties opposite. I had a chance in an earlier question from the honourable Leader of the Opposition to speak about the sunshine list out today. What it shows is that two thirds of the people wouldn't even be on it if it was protected against inflation and that overall growth in the incomes is very, very limited indeed. It's a matter of transparency. People will have an opportunity, and in fact all Ontarians, to look in there and see what the rates of compensation are across the public sector very broadly. We think this is an appropriate mechanism, but we don't support the honourable member's characterization about big, sweeping pay increases; that's not reflected in the data.

## MUNICIPAL INFRASTRUCTURE

**Mr. John Yakabuski:** My question is for the Deputy Premier. Your Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal proudly reannounced today the \$1-billion infrastructure program for communities in the province of Ontario, of which \$400 million is for communities outside the GTA. I quote: "It's for roads and bridges." Now, Deputy Premier, that money isn't really going for roads and bridges, is it? I want to quote the member from Ottawa Centre, again saying this money, \$14.6 million for the city of Ottawa, is for roads and bridges. He's so proud of what it's going to mean for roads and bridges in the city of Ottawa. But then we hear that the city of Ottawa is not obliged to use that \$14.6 million for infrastructure at all. Deputy Premier, why are there no strings attached to this money, and will you put a stop to what we see as another slush fund?

**Hon. George Smitherman:** I listened very carefully to try and see what the honourable member's point was. I think he was standing up and opposing investments in his own community. Was the honourable member in fact saying that the Madawaska Valley township doesn't need \$5 million in investment for waste water; that Petawawa

doesn't need a \$1.6-million investment to enhance their waste water capacities; that Renfrew county doesn't need \$1 million to repair bridges; that the township of Renfrew doesn't need \$750,000?

The honourable members have demonstrated a very fine ability over the last number of weeks to be on both sides of issues. They send us letters constantly asking us for more spending and then they stand up in the Legislature saying that if they were in office, they would cut \$5 billion immediately. We've seen that play before, and Ontarians don't want to go back to a day when we don't have investments possible for public services and where nurses are being laid off.

**Mr. John Yakabuski:** This is not about spending; it's about accountability. Let me quote the Auditor General, who said in 2005 that he's concerned about year-end spending on the part of the McGuinty government, repeated in 2006 and repeated in June of 2007, and again in December of 2007, where he says, "In the majority of cases, normal accountability and control provisions were reduced or eliminated." This is about your accounting procedures. Throw money out the door at the last minute without any strings attached—that's not what taxpayers in this province expect. They expect spending, but they expect some controls over it and some real reasons why it's been spent. I would ask today that you ask the Auditor General to look at this entire infrastructure program and how you've accounted for the \$1 billion of taxpayers' money that you're putting out the door at the end of the year because you couldn't plan any better.

**Hon. George Smitherman:** Here's what Bill Vrebosch, the Conservative candidate in Nipissing and the mayor of East Ferris said about our budget: "The fact that the Ontario government kept their promise ... towards infrastructure renewal, and like this morning, me getting \$233,000 for my small township—I mean, my taxes ... are going to be low this year because of the fact that the government has committed to reducing the impact on my taxpayers through infrastructure renewal and the fact that they uploaded OW and ODSP."

And from the very same member, in a letter to my colleague the Minister of Municipal Affairs, dated March 18—to make a long story short: support the "proposal submitted to you by Algonquin College in Pembroke, as they seek to build a new campus." Price tag? Thirty-one million dollars.

1450

## TUITION

**Mr. Rosario Marchese:** The question is to the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities. Minister, last Friday, Judge Lax said it was up to the government to enforce its own rules when it comes to stopping colleges from raising prohibited tuition-related fees. That, I admit, produced a little chuckle, because this is a government that has always been aware that colleges, in particular, and universities were collecting banned fees. In fact, as a backbench MPP, Mr. McGuinty told us in this



assembly that turning a blind eye to tuition-related fee increases is like raising tuition through the back door.

Can the minister tell us, when are he and his Premier going to close the back door and enforce the ban?

**Hon. John Milloy:** I'd like to thank the member for the question and welcome the representatives of various student organizations who are with us today at Queen's Park. I look forward to meeting with a number of them this afternoon and tomorrow.

I'm obviously very aware of the judge's ruling on Friday, but as the honourable member knows, we're now presently in an appeal period, and it would be inappropriate for me to comment on the substance of that judge's ruling.

But I would like to take the opportunity, since the honourable member raises the issue of support for students, to say how proud I am to be part of a government that, through our \$6.2-billion Reaching Higher plan, put forward \$1.5 billion in support for students. That means that we've doubled our investments in student aid since 2003-04. We're helping 150,000 students per year with financial assistance. We've increased OSAP maximums by 27%—the first time in 12 years.

I find it strange, coming from a party that cut student aid by nearly 50%, cut funding to our post-secondary education institutions and eliminated upfront grants for students.

**Mr. Rosario Marchese:** I want to say to the minister that pretending the problem does not exist is not an answer. Only the Premier has the power to protect students. The Canadian Federation of Students, who are here today, are looking to McGuinty and to you, Minister, to enforce his government's own rules, which clearly ban these ancillary fees. The minister can either stop colleges and universities from raising these fees and invest the \$50 million a year to implement such a policy without hurting the colleges, or his government can continue to ignore its own rules.

If it's the latter, can the minister then explain to Ontario students, what is the point of having rules that you won't follow?

**Hon. John Milloy:** As I said, the matter is still technically before the court, but I'd like to take this opportunity to talk not only about our Reaching Higher plan but our most recent budget, which contained \$465 million over three years for Ontario students, including a \$385-million textbook and technology grant and a \$27-million distance grant.

One of the groups which I understand is in the lobby today is the College Student Alliance. I'd like to read what they said in their press release on budget day: "The McGuinty government is delivering for Ontario's college and university students in today's budget with improvements to the affordability of post-secondary education, and building a stronger and more prosperous Ontario with a \$1.5 billion skills-to-jobs action plan, says the College Student Alliance.

"College and college/university students welcome the textbook and technology grants that will start to ease the

pressures felt by the growing cost of obtaining a post-secondary education"—

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Thank you. New question.

## CONSERVATION

**Ms. Helena Jaczek:** My question is for the Minister of Energy. I was pleased to join Canadians in more than 160 municipalities who turned out the lights for Earth Hour on Saturday night. Reports indicate that at least 50 million people participated worldwide; more than 250,000 people and 6,000 businesses signed up online in the lead-up to the event.

Earth Hour raised awareness and highlighted the important role of conservation. It made us look at our daily electricity usage and recognize how small steps can benefit ourselves as consumers, the environment and also our infrastructure.

My family enjoyed a candlelit dinner followed by stargazing from the deck and vowed to repeat the experience frequently in the future. Would the minister responsible for energy conservation tell us if we were able to measure the impact and where we go from here?

**Hon. Gerry Phillips:** I thank the member from Oak Ridges-Markham. I really want to congratulate the people of Ontario who participated in this wonderful event. I was with several members of the Legislature from all three parties—Mr. Prue and others—on Greek Independence Day. The lights were off, the candles were on, and they recognized it.

I think 900 megawatts were saved at that time. What does that mean? Three quarters of a million homes: That's how much electricity three quarters of a million homes would have used. So in terms of dealing with greenhouse gas, it was a great move.

What are the next steps? There are so many things we can all be doing. The government, by the way, has cut its electricity use by 12%. I would urge people to do a home energy audit. There are refunds available, paid for by the taxpayers of Ontario, to help you implement the recommendations of that. That's one next step that I think everybody in this province would like to do.

**Ms. Helena Jaczek:** Minister, I realize there are dozens of ways we can all partake in conservation initiatives. In my community, for instance, PowerStream has installed over 80,000 smart meters and is actively engaging citizens to participate in the many conservation programs through the Ontario Power Authority. Some of these programs available include Every Kilowatt Counts, Peaksaver and the Great Refrigerator Roundup. Would the minister tell us where we are on these initiatives? Are they making a difference, and what are we doing to ensure that we are ahead of the curve on conservation?

**Hon. Gerry Phillips:** I thank what we call the LDCs, the local distribution companies, and our local hydro companies and local power companies, who are doing a great job on the installation of smart meters. This will allow people to measure how much electricity they use



on an hourly basis and allow us to save electricity, because we'll watch the cost of it and shift our use to off-peak times when it's much cheaper to use electricity. So I want to thank all of the local distribution companies helping with the smart meters.

There are a bunch of other things going on. Over a million coupons now—people have switched off the energy-inefficient light bulbs and bought themselves new light bulbs; a great idea. In the budget, we extended the holiday on the PST, the provincial sales tax, on energy-efficient appliances. Finally, for those of you who might have a beer fridge in your basement: Pull the plug—it's costing you \$150 a year—bring the beer upstairs to your other fridge, and that will save an awful lot of electricity and cut greenhouse gases for the people of Ontario. One good idea.

### MANUFACTURING JOBS

**Mr. Ted Chudleigh:** My question is to the Deputy Premier. This morning, the Premier announced a \$17.1-million aid package for a Ford engine plant in Windsor. Supposedly, the money will contribute to a project that will save one third of the jobs lost when the plant closed last November. I say "supposedly" because, although the money is committed, the details are still far from clear and the jobs are far from saved. I'm happy for those 300 lucky workers who might return to work, but I share the dismay of hundreds of thousands of unemployed workers around the province who did not win the Liberal lottery. Deputy Premier, do you plan to rescue all of Ontario's 200,000 lost manufacturing jobs one plant at a time? At \$17.1 million a pop, how can we afford it?

**Hon. George Smitherman:** I thank the honourable member for his encouragement of the strategy taken today. It stands quite consistent with the remarks of Mr. Tory, the leader of that party, where he says: "I have said repeatedly ... that I think any Premier of Ontario must keep in his toolbox all the tools necessary to make sure that we maintain and attract automobile investment in the province of Ontario."

Indeed, we're very proud that our government is in partnership with Ford of Canada, the result of which, in the Windsor community—which, as the member knows, has been very hard hit—is that 300 people will regain their employment. We think this is a very substantial step forward.

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The good news is—and I'll have a chance in a moment to remind the honourable member of some of the quotes I spoke of earlier—we're seeing some other investments that are made more stable as a result of strategies in last week's budget. Most certainly we send a message to Ontarians who are in an economically challenging situation that they have in us a government that's willing to fight on their side.

**Mr. Ted Chudleigh:** The economic motto of this government seems to be "patronage, patchwork and

partisanship." I was going to put it into verse, but I didn't think it would get through.

Instead of attracting and maintaining economic activity by creating a business-friendly atmosphere, the government provides Band-Aids for wounds that it helped to inflict. Manufacturers in Windsor and the rest of Ontario need more than the odd handout and photo ops for local ministers. They need tax cuts, less red tape, and a government that is at least slightly savvy in economics and less obsessed with controlling the market.

Deputy Premier, if you insist on one-off spending, political grandstanding and unnecessarily high taxes, will you at least spread some of the funds around in non-Liberal-held ridings?

**Hon. George Smitherman:** There are many places to go in answer to the honourable member, but he makes it seem like that's the only part of the strategy. We have a five-point economic strategy which at the heart of it is about the infrastructure and our people. On a day when we have so many representatives of the college and university sector here—they're talking about investment, enhancing the number of spaces and opportunities—it's good to remind the honourable member: a \$1.5-billion skills-to-jobs action plan; 100,000 more people in colleges and universities; 10,000 more who are graduating from high school; 50,000 more apprentices who are working; a 25% increase in apprentices. This is a reflection that our government understands that the strength of Ontario is its people, and, accordingly, we're pleased to make investments in people, understanding that that's where the best economic opportunities flow from.

### LOW-INCOME ONTARIANS

**Mr. Michael Prue:** My question is for the Deputy Premier. In today's Toronto Star, Carol Goar sets out five choices that this government might have in its war on poverty. To be absolutely clear, the five choices she sets out are: (1) set meaningless targets; (2) stretch out your timelines; (3) forget balancing the budget; (4) raise taxes; (5) admit that the government can't keep its promises. Mr. Deputy Premier, can you tell me which of those five you choose?

**Hon. George Smitherman:** I don't have to stand in my place and respond to a list that somebody else drew up. I'm part of a government that's very pleased to be in a position to enhance the minimum wage today by a raise of 9.3%, to be part of a government that's bringing forward a dental program, that's added resources for student nutrition, that's put \$100 million into the renewal of public housing stock, and, more than anything else, that has made this enormous, substantive commitment to the lowest-income children in the province of Ontario through the Ontario child benefit, which this year will be increased from \$250 to \$600 per child in eligible households.

This is about more than a million children in the province of Ontario. This is a centrepiece of any poverty reduction strategy, and that's why we're getting on with



the work, because we all know people in Ontario who will benefit from such an initiative.

**Mr. Michael Prue:** Last week, neither the minister nor his parliamentary assistant would absolutely state what the social assistance base increase has been under this government's watch in the last four years, so perhaps to inform the government, it has been 7%. That's it. Since 2003, this government has eked out a miserly 7% increase for those who are on ODSP and Ontario Works, and that's the base rate.

When will the government increase begin to reflect the actual needs of the poor, start to make up for the drastic cuts the government promised to reverse from the previous government, and restore the rates that people can actually live on?

**Hon. George Smitherman:** We know that the honourable member in his questioning likes to talk about commitments that have been made by others and put them in a different context, but across the landscape of government investment is a recognition about the government's commitment to people who are struggling with low income: a well-functioning education system, a well-functioning health care system, investments to infrastructure, increases in the minimum wage, the introduction and subsequent increase of the Ontario child benefit, a \$100-million investment in the renewal of public housing stock, increases in student nutrition programs, the introduction of a substantial increase in resources for a benefit related to dental care—all companions to increases to social assistance rates.

We recognize our obligations across the broad landscape of government, and people who are in low-income circumstances have higher call and higher need for good public services. That's why we're proud to make investments in that area.

## ROYAL ONTARIO MUSEUM

**Mr. Shafiq Qaadri:** It's a privilege for me to address for the first time a question to the Minister of Culture, the Honourable Aileen Carroll. The Royal Ontario Museum has recently had a very elegant and remarkable major expansion as well as a number of gallery openings in the new Michael Lee-Chin Crystal.

Minister, can you please tell this House what the ROM, as an Ontario landmark, has been doing to inspire visitors, engage the public in its programming and foster culture?

**Hon. M. Aileen Carroll:** I would like to thank the honourable member for Etobicoke North, who is a great supporter of the culture industry.

The ROM, an agency of the Ministry of Culture, continues its tradition of showcasing world-class exhibits for Ontarians and visitors from around the world to enjoy. Two recent exhibits have generated a great deal of interest. The unique Age of Dinosaurs and Darwin: the Evolution Revolution are attracting a record number of visitors through its doors. In fact, this March break there

was a 76% increase in visitor attendance over the previous year.

I am also delighted that the ROM will unveil a new gallery this week on Africa, the Americas and Asia-Pacific. The new gallery will be prominently showcased in the Lee-Chin Crystal. And it's very important that you all know the crystal was named one of the new seven wonders of the world by the internationally recognized Condé Nast Traveller magazine. I encourage you all to look at that great double-page spread in—

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Thank you.

**Mr. Shafiq Qaadri:** I would like to thank, on behalf of all members of this chamber, the Minister of Culture for her stewardship of this cultural renaissance that is taking place in Toronto and across the province.

Of course, a cultural development of this magnitude would no doubt have an extremely positive impact on tourism for the city of Toronto and Ontario. So, to the Minister of Tourism, the Honourable Peter Fonseca, I'd like to ask the question: How will the recent designation of the Royal Ontario Museum's Michael Lee-Chin Crystal as one of the new seven wonders of the world impact tourism and the economy in Ontario?

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Minister of Culture.

**Hon. M. Aileen Carroll:** I'd like to refer the question to the Minister of Tourism.

**Hon. Peter Fonseca:** Thank you to the member for the question. The inclusion of the Michael Lee-Chin Crystal in Condé Nast Traveller's new seven wonders of the world is a coup for tourism in this city and in this province.

This magazine is so highly regarded and influential among international travellers. The monthly readership is over two million potential travellers globally. A feature piece in this magazine puts the Royal Ontario Museum and the Michael Lee-Chin Crystal on a global context with immediate and increased media coverage. This type of international media attention and cultural recognition builds on the efforts our government has already embarked on to increase international tourists to Ontario.

This year, we're expanding our popular multimedia There's No Place Like This campaign and reaching out to key US markets like Boston, Chicago and New York.

## ONTARIO BUDGET

**Mr. Peter Shurman:** My question is for the Deputy Premier. In the recent budget, the McGuinty government crowed about \$5 billion in "unexpected revenue." "Unexpected revenue"—they speak as if they found five bucks in their jeans while doing the laundry.

We're talking about \$5 billion here. Let's drop the McGuinty code talk and call it what it really is: \$5 billion in overtaxation, \$5 billion that, when divided between Ontario's 12.8 million people, works out to overtaxation of \$390 for every man, woman and child.

Is the Deputy Premier prepared today to call upon the Auditor General to thoroughly investigate the govern-



ment's accounting practices to ensure in the future that the wallets of the people of Ontario are not hit with any more supposed surprises?

1510

**Hon. George Smitherman:** I recognize that the honourable member is new, but someone here, a member in the front row perhaps, might explain to him that that is the function of the Auditor General. In fact, we get a lot of advice and direction about the way that the government must account for resources, which was described in part of the questioning last week.

But what's really surprising is that at the beginning of question period today the irony was that the Conservatives were complaining about not being part of announcements, and now we have a member standing up and saying there shouldn't have been any in the first place. This is what we're seeing on a regular basis. On the one hand, they stand up—incoherence—and they ask for a substantial tax reduction. In the next breath and by way of letter, they hammer government ministers with expectations of substantial increases. There is no better example of this than the member from Thornhill, who has fond expectations of multi-hundred-million-dollar investment from the government.

**Mr. Peter Shurman:** The government talks about this money as if it's theirs. It's not theirs; it belongs to the people of Ontario, and the people of Ontario deserve to know how each and every one of them was hit with an extra \$390 in taxes by the inept accounting of this government.

The people of Ontario could have put this money towards their retirement, or education funds, or perhaps towards some household repairs, or maybe it could have bought a child's first bike or some hockey equipment. This \$5 billion in overtaxation is further evidence that the \$2.8-billion health tax has never been required.

Will the Deputy Premier stand in this chamber today and apologize to the people of Ontario for taking money they need more than him and tell Ontarians when they can expect the Minister of Finance to be mailing out the refund cheques for \$390?

**Hon. George Smitherman:** If there's an apology owed to the people of the province of Ontario, it's two-fold. Firstly, it's on the part of a previous government that hasn't yet fessed up for the circumstances it left behind of a \$5.6-billion deficit. But even worse is on the part of this member, who in one breath asks for more money—in one breath he stands, as he did last week, and asks for more money; he wants to build a new hospital in his community—and on the other he stands up and says that the health premium is pointless for the purposes of advancing expenditure in health care.

It's interesting that the member from Woodstock said recently about the hospice, "I'm elated with the amount. We're now looking forward to fundraising and getting the hospice open. It's a significant achievement and it will allow them to move forward and get construction under way." That's from another member, another voice—more incoherence from the party opposite.

## ABORIGINAL RIGHTS

**Mr. Howard Hampton:** My question is for the Deputy Premier. This past Friday, for the first time in the history of Ontario, I understand, I actually had to go to a jail to meet with an Ontario First Nation leader. Chief Donny Morris of Kitchenuhmaykoosib Inninuwug First Nation is in jail because the McGuinty government granted a permit to a mining exploration company without first consulting and accommodating the First Nation, as required by the Supreme Court of Canada. Chief Morris wants to know the answer to one elementary question: Why did the McGuinty government give a mining exploration permit to a mining company without first consulting and accommodating the rights and interests of the First Nation, as you're required to do by the Supreme Court of Canada?

**Hon. George Smitherman:** To the Minister of Northern Development and Mines.

**Hon. Michael Gravelle:** I appreciate the question from the leader of the third party. We are obviously very disappointed and saddened by the outcome of the dispute between Kitchenuhmaykoosib Inninuwug and Platinex, but I do want to say to the leader of the third party that we take our duty to consult very seriously. Indeed, we have met that duty to consult. That was confirmed by Justice Patrick Smith in his May 2007 decision. But we also understand that our duty to consult is an ongoing one, and it's one that will require us to continue our efforts as we move forward. May I say, as everybody in the Legislature knows, my colleague, the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs, has made many attempts—three visits up to the community—to try to help find a resolution, and we appreciate those efforts. But even before that was the case, we had visited the community on a number of occasions. Perhaps in the supplementary I'll get an opportunity to explain how indeed we have worked so hard to meet that duty to consult.

**Mr. Howard Hampton:** The McGuinty government has made visits to the community, but that is not consultation as required by the Supreme Court of Canada. The fact is, the McGuinty government gave a mining permit without consulting and accommodating. That has resulted in the incarceration of Chief Morris and five other members of the community.

An appeal is now going to be filed with respect to this matter, an appeal asking that the sentencing of the First Nation leaders be overturned. The McGuinty government says that they want to work with First Nations. My question is this: Is the McGuinty government prepared to stand today and commit to unconditionally supporting this appeal and the release of the KI and Ardoch leadership pending their appeals?

**Hon. Michael Gravelle:** I will refer this to the Attorney General.

**Hon. Christopher Bentley:** As a former Attorney General, the leader of the third party would know it would be inappropriate to comment in this place about matters which are before the court and about which the



present state and the disposition are still unclear. What we can say, supporting the comments the minister had made before and the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs has said on many occasions is that it's the determination of this government to develop the new relationship with our First Nations, to work things through in as co-operative a fashion as possible. I look forward to the results of the discussions by both the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and the Minister of Northern Development and Mines. Hopefully, we will have a very productive future for this region of the province.

### HEALTH SERVICES

**Mr. Bill Mauro:** My question is to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. Minister, there's been a lot of discussion about the investments that you're making in health care. My constituents have seen significant improvements in health care, but there is always more work to do. You were in Thunder Bay on Friday to tour the angioplasty cath lab at the Thunder Bay Regional Health Sciences Centre and you also made an announcement about the Sioux Lookout Meno Ya Win Health Centre. Can you please tell my constituents how this announcement will improve health care for the residents of Sioux Lookout, the local aboriginal communities and surrounding communities?

**Hon. George Smitherman:** I want to thank and congratulate the member for Thunder Bay—Atikokan. We had a chance to meet with representatives that live in northwestern Ontario who, as a result of the investments our government has made, can now receive those services in Thunder Bay rather than having to be sent to places like Ottawa.

We're really, really pleased that we're able to move to tender the next stage for the Meno Ya Win Health Centre. This is a very impressive and exciting 140,000-square-foot facility. It brings together the federal and provincial health systems under one umbrella in Sioux Lookout, a community that plays a crucial role in supporting 28 aboriginal fly-in communities in that area. It's been designated as a First Nations centre of health excellence, and some new investments in the Meno Ya Win will be a five-bed withdrawal management, a dedicated palliative care unit, an expanded chronic kidney disease program, and screening and diagnostic mammography, all substantial evidence of necessary investments to benefit especially the health of our First Nations population.

**Mr. Bill Mauro:** I'm sure that people in Sioux Lookout and the surrounding areas will benefit from this new investment. I know that delivering accessible and culturally appropriate health care is very important to First Nations communities across the province. On Friday, while you were in Thunder Bay, you delivered a speech to a LHIN-sponsored aboriginal forum. Could you tell me what you discussed and how you're improving health care for aboriginals in Ontario?

**Hon. George Smitherman:** I was very pleased to have a chance to participate at the Victoria Inn with near-

ly 200 leaders and individuals who work on health matters from the aboriginal communities of northwestern Ontario. This was sponsored by the local health integration network and stands as a good bit of progress.

One of the concerns the chiefs have raised was that the AHWS, aboriginal healing and wellness strategy, might at some point come under the umbrella of the local health integration networks. I told them that wasn't something we were proponents of and, further, that the capacity building associated with the local planning tables was the firm commitment that we had to enhance the capacity of First Nations communities to participate in dialogue with local health integration networks, to see that the investments we're making in health care have a positive effect for the health status of our First Nations populations. We were very pleased to see nearly 200 people participating in that forum.

1520

### MUNICIPAL INFRASTRUCTURE

**Mr. Bill Murdoch:** My question is to the minister of—Mr. Caplan over there. As you know, we talked today about the list of projects that were going to be out—the secret list that no one else got over here. I would ask the minister today to stand up and promise today in this House that we will get that list within half an hour of leaving this House. The list must be there somewhere; it came out of his office. He bragged about it today. That's the \$400 million that you're giving out to municipalities other than Toronto. You've given them \$400-some million. Would the minister commit today to giving us that list as we leave this House?

**Hon. David Caplan:** I want to thank the member from Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound. I have in front of me the website of Infrastructure Ontario. If you go there, it says "List of Successful Applicants." If the member took the time, a few clicks of a button on a mouse, to go to that website, he would find out that in the town of Hanover in the great riding of Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound—in fact, I had a chance to meet Mayor Maskell at the Rural Ontario Municipal Association. She talked to me about their waste water project. In fact, they received funding. I note that the city of Owen Sound—and I spoke with Mayor Lovell—they too, for their water project: \$1,169,563,000.

All the member need do, all that any member of this Legislature need do, is go to the Infrastructure Ontario website and click the link that says "List of Successful Applicants." I'm sure that the member will be able to find the information he needs.

**Mr. Bill Murdoch:** Minister, it's too bad you weren't on the right side as to what's going on over here. That's the fund. We have that fund. That's the MIII. We all understand that one, although we didn't get it until Monday. We didn't get it on Friday, when all the ministers and all the members of the Liberal Party were out there announcing these great details. We did not get it until Monday. But we want the secret slush fund. This is the \$400 million.



*Interjection.*

**Mr. Bill Murdoch:** There; he's going to get it right now. I'm glad that somebody in your office has finally woken up and given you the right one.

We don't have this. This is the one that was announced for Huron-Bruce: \$18 million last week. We have not got that one.

*Applause.*

**Mr. Bill Murdoch:** They may clap over there for that, and that's fine, but what about the rest of Ontario, the Conservative ridings and those NDP ridings that you forgot about? Let's see if you can answer that question, Minister.

**Hon. David Caplan:** I always ask myself how my good friend from Pembroke would have asked the question. I know he would have done a much better job. I can tell you, sir, that, in addition to the Infrastructure Ontario website—very easy for any member of this Legislature to access—letters went out to all cities, all towns, all municipalities. All MPPs in this Legislature were copied on those letters. I can assure the member that they were mailed out, that they will go out, that he too will receive the information, as all members of this Legislature do. But it's a rather simple matter. I know, for example, that the member would want to know that the long-term-care home in Grey county received funding under MIII, that Chatsworth township also received some funding to be able to do their roads, that the municipality of West Grey received \$350,000 to fix up their recreation centre. These are the kinds of—

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** The time for question period has ended.

**Mr. Bill Murdoch:** On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: We'll have to have a late show, unfortunately, because the minister hasn't figured out what list he's talking about. He's on the wrong list. So I'll request a late show tonight.

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** The honourable member knows the procedure. There's a form that's to be filled out at the table, and I would ask him to proceed to the table and fill out the appropriate forms.

## PETITIONS

### LORD'S PRAYER

**Mr. Norm Miller:** I've received a number of petitions to do with maintaining the Lord's Prayer here in the Legislature. It reads:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Premier Dalton McGuinty has called on the Ontario Legislature to consider removing the Lord's Prayer from its daily proceedings; and

"Whereas the recitation of the Lord's Prayer has opened the Legislature every day since the 19th century; and

"Whereas the Lord's Prayer's message is one of forgiveness, of providing for those in need of their 'daily bread' and of preserving us from the evils we may fall into; it is a valuable guide and lesson for a chamber that is too often an arena of conflict; and

"Whereas recognizing the diversity of the people of Ontario should be an inclusive process, not one which excludes traditions such as the Lord's Prayer;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, ask the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to preserve the daily recitation of the Lord's Prayer by the Speaker in the Legislature."

I support this petition and affix my signature.

### HOME CARE

**Mr. Paul Miller:** I have a petition today to present to the Legislature from the SEIU and the people of Sarnia.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ontario government has continued the practice of competitive bidding for home care services; and

"Whereas the competitive bidding process has increased the privatization of Ontario's health care delivery, in direct violation of the Commitment to the Future of Medicare Act, 2004; and

"Whereas competitive bidding for home care services has decreased both the continuity and quality of care available to home care clients; and

"Whereas home care workers do not enjoy the same employment rights, such as successor rights, as all other Ontario workers have, which deprives them of termination rights, seniority rights and the right to move with their work when their employer agency loses a contract;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"We call on the government of Ontario:

"(1) to immediately stop the competitive bidding for home care services so home care clients can receive the continuity and quality of care they deserve; and

"(2) to extend successor rights under the Labour Relations Act to home care workers to ensure the home care sector is able to retain a workforce that is responsive to clients' needs."

I support this petition, and I hereby sign my name to it.

### WYE MARSH WILDLIFE CENTRE

**Mr. Bob Delaney:** I'm pleased to join with my colleague from Simcoe North in this petition regarding the Wye Marsh Wildlife Centre. I'd especially like to thank Megan Francis from Orillia—and a number of other people from Orillia, Lefroy, Barrie, Washago and Midland—for having signed it. It reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Wye Marsh Wildlife Centre, located in the township of Tay, manages approximately 3,000 acres



of environmentally sensitive land which is owned by the province of Ontario; and

"Whereas over 50,000 people visit the Wye Marsh Wildlife Centre each year; and

"Whereas over 20,000 students from across Ontario visit the Wye Marsh Wildlife Centre each year, receiving curriculum-based environmental education not available in schools; and

"Whereas the Wye Marsh Wildlife Centre receives no stable funding from any level of government;

"We, the undersigned, petition the province of Ontario to establish a reasonable and stable long-term funding formula so that the Wye Marsh Wildlife Centre can continue to operate and exist into the future."

I'm pleased to add my voice of support and to ask page Christopher to carry it for me.

### HOSPITAL FUNDING

**Mr. Garfield Dunlop:** I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly from the western Mississauga ambulatory surgery centre:

"Whereas wait times for access to surgical procedures in the western GTA area served by the Mississauga Halton LHIN are growing despite the vigorous capital project activity at the hospitals within the Mississauga Halton LHIN boundaries; and

"Whereas 'day surgery' procedures could be performed in an off-site facility, thus greatly increasing the ability of surgeons to perform more procedures, alleviating wait times for patients, and freeing up operating theatre space in hospitals for more complex procedures that may require post-operative intensive care unit support and a longer length of stay in hospital;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care allocate funds in its 2008-09 capital budget to begin planning and construction of an ambulatory surgery centre located in western Mississauga to serve the Mississauga-Halton area and enable greater access to 'day surgery' procedures that comprise about four fifths of all surgical procedures performed."

I'm pleased to sign this and present it to Natalie to present to the table.

1530

### HOME CARE

**M<sup>me</sup> France Gélinas:** I have a petition from SEIU and the people of North Bay and Nipissing area:

"Whereas the Ontario government has continued the practice of competitive bidding for home care services; and

"Whereas the competitive bidding process has increased the privatization of Ontario's health care delivery, in direct violation of the Commitment to the Future of Medicare Act, 2004; and

"Whereas competitive bidding for home care services has decreased both the continuity and quality of care available to home care clients; and

"Whereas home care workers do not enjoy the same employment rights, such as successor rights, as all other Ontario workers have, which deprives them of termination rights, seniority rights and the right to move with their work when their employer agency loses a contract; ...

"We call on the government of Ontario:

"(1) to immediately stop the competitive bidding for home care services so home care clients can receive the continuity and quality of care they deserve; and

"(2) to extend successor rights under the Labour Relations Act to home care workers to ensure the home care sector is able to retain a workforce that is responsive to clients' needs."

I support this petition and affix my name to it.

### ANTI-SMOKING LEGISLATION

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson):** Petitions? The member for Peterborough.

**Mr. Jeff Leal:** Congratulations to you, Mr. Speaker. You're doing a great job in the chair.

I have a petition by a group of teenagers from the riding of Peterborough. It's a petition on children and smoke-free cars, supporting Bill 11.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas children exposed to second-hand smoke are at a higher risk for respiratory illnesses including asthma, bronchitis and pneumonia, as well as sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS) and increased incidences of cancer and heart disease in adulthood; and

"Whereas the Ontario Medical Association supports a ban on smoking in vehicles when children are present, as they have concluded that levels of second-hand smoke can be 23 times more concentrated in a vehicle than in a house because circulation is restricted within a small space; and

"Whereas the Ipsos Reid poll conducted on behalf of the Ontario Tobacco-Free Network indicates that eight in 10 (80%) of Ontarians support 'legislation that would ban smoking in cars and other private vehicles where a child or adolescent under 16 years of age is present'; and

"Whereas Nova Scotia, California, Puerto Rico, and South Australia recently joined several jurisdictions of the United States of America in banning smoking in vehicles carrying children;

"We, the undersigned, respectfully petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to approve Bill 11 and amend the Smoke-Free Ontario Act to ban smoking in vehicles carrying children 16 years of age and under."

I support this petition and will affix my signature to it.

### LORD'S PRAYER

**Mrs. Julia Munro:** "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:



"Whereas the current Liberal government is proposing to eliminate the Lord's Prayer from its place at the beginning of daily proceedings in the Legislature; and

"Whereas the recitation of the Lord's Prayer has opened the Legislature every day since the 19th century; and

"Whereas the Lord's Prayer's message is one of forgiveness, of providing for those in need of their 'daily bread' and of preserving us from the evils we may fall into; it is a valuable guide and lesson for a chamber that is too often an arena for conflict; and

"Whereas recognizing the diversity of the people of Ontario should be an inclusive process, not one which excludes traditions such as the Lord's Prayer;

"Therefore we, the undersigned ask the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to preserve the daily recitation of the Lord's Prayer by the Speaker in the Legislature."

As I am in agreement, I have affixed my signature. I'm pleased to be able to give it to page Ramandeep to deliver to the table.

#### NON-PROFIT HOUSING

**Mr. Rosario Marchese:** I have a petition here signed by many who live in the Toronto Community Housing company. They submit this petition, and it reads:

"Whereas every citizen of Ontario should have a safe, healthy and decent home; and

"Whereas thousands of individuals and families are denied this basic right when the province of Ontario downloaded affordable housing to the city of Toronto but refused to pay for the hundreds of millions of dollars in deferred capital repairs; and

"Whereas poor living conditions undermine the safety and security of communities, harming children, youth and families living in affordable homes; and

"Whereas failure to invest in good repair undermines the values of the province's affordable housing as the condition of the housing stock deteriorates; and

"Whereas poor living conditions have a damaging impact on the health of communities, costing Ontarians millions in health costs; and

"Whereas investment in housing pays off in better residences and in stronger, safer, healthier communities; and

"Whereas residents of Toronto Community Housing have waited five years for the province to pay its bills and bring affordable housing to a state of good repair;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to:

"Accept its responsibility and invest \$300 million to ensure that all residents of Toronto Community Housing have a safe, decent and healthy home."

I support the petition, and I'll be signing it.

#### ANTI-SMOKING LEGISLATION

**Mrs. Amrit Mangat:** This petition is for children in smoke-free cars, in support of Bill 11.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas children exposed to second-hand smoke are at a higher risk for respiratory illnesses including asthma, bronchitis and pneumonia, as well as sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS) and increased incidences of cancer and heart disease in adulthood; and

"Whereas the Ontario Medical Association supports a ban on smoking in vehicles when children are present, as they have concluded that levels of second-hand smoke can be 23 times more concentrated in a vehicle than in a house because circulation is restricted within a small space; and

"Whereas the Ipsos Reid poll conducted on behalf of the Ontario Tobacco-Free Network indicates that eight in 10 (80%) of Ontarians support 'legislation that would ban smoking in cars and other private vehicles where a child or adolescent under 16 years of age is present'; and

"Whereas Nova Scotia, California, Puerto Rico, and South Australia recently joined several jurisdictions of the United States of America in banning smoking in vehicles carrying children;

"We, the undersigned, respectfully petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to approve Bill 11 and amend the Smoke-Free Ontario Act to ban smoking in vehicles carrying children 16 years of age and under."

I support this petition and affix my signature.

#### ROAD SAFETY

**Mr. John O'Toole:** It's my pleasure to read a petition on behalf of my constituents of the riding of Durham. By the way, congratulations, Deputy Chair, on your appointment. I look forward to being recognized more frequently. The petition reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas many vehicles on Highway 12 are continuing to travel at speeds exceeding the speed limit through the village of Greenbank;

"Whereas residents in the community are deeply concerned over the safety of pedestrians along this provincial highway in Greenbank because of the high speeds and volume of traffic;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to request that the Ministry of Transportation proceed immediately with the following safety improvements:

"—repainting the crosswalk;

"—a new overhead flashing light crosswalk sign;

"—the installation of flashing lights at the entrance and exit to the village of Greenbank to the north and to the south alerting drivers to the reduced speed;

"—consideration for this area to be designated a community safety zone."

I'm pleased to sign this on behalf of my constituents from Greenbank.



## HOME CARE

**M<sup>me</sup> France Gélinas:** I have a petition from SEIU and the people of Sault Ste. Marie, Echo Bay and Bruce Mines.

"Whereas the Ontario government has continued the practice of competitive bidding for home care services; and

"Whereas the competitive bidding process has increased the privatization of Ontario's health care delivery, in direct violation of the Commitment to the Future of Medicare Act, 2004; and

"Whereas competitive bidding for home care services has decreased both the continuity and quality of care available to home care clients; and

"Whereas home care workers do not enjoy the same employment rights, such as successor rights, as all other Ontario workers have, which deprives them of termination rights, seniority rights and the right to move with their work when their employer agency loses a contract;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"We call on the government of Ontario:

"(1) to immediately stop the competitive bidding for home care services so home care clients can receive the continuity and quality of care they deserve; and

"(2) to extend successor rights under the Labour Relations Act to home care workers to ensure the home care sector is able to retain a workforce that is responsive to clients' needs."

I support this petition and will affix my name to it.

1540

## DAVID DUNLAP OBSERVATORY

**Mr. Reza Moridi:** Mr. Speaker, I present to you today about 625 signatures, which were presented to me during the rally held at Queen's Park on January 16 on a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the David Dunlap Observatory in Richmond Hill is of historical and heritage significance;

"Whereas the land was donated in trust by the Dunlap family to the University of Toronto in 1935 and the pre-Confederation farmhouse is still standing;

"Whereas the observatory, featuring the largest optical telescope in Canada, has been the site of scientific discoveries, it has been a place of learning not only for students of the University of Toronto but for the general public as well;

"Whereas the observatory has been recently declared by the University of Toronto as surplus to its academic needs and subject to sale for development;

"Whereas the observatory" occupies "an incredibly unique and beautiful 180 acres of green space, the largest such space in the town of Richmond Hill, with trees, birds, animals, plants, insects and butterflies in" the middle of "a rapidly urbanized area;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to ... protect this property of such historical, scientific and natural significance" from being used as commercial development.

## ORDERS OF THE DAY

## SUPPLY ACT, 2008

## LOI DE CRÉDITS DE 2008

Mr. Gravelle, on behalf of Mr. Duncan, moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 45, An Act to authorize the expenditure of certain amounts for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2008 / Projet de loi 45, Loi autorisant l'utilisation de certaines sommes pour l'exercice se terminant le 31 mars 2008.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson):** Do we have agreement that the member for Pickering-Scarborough East can lead off the debate for the Liberals? Agreed. The member for Pickering-Scarborough East.

**Mr. Wayne Arthurs:** I'm pleased to rise in the Legislature today to speak to Bill 45, the Supply Act, 2008. The Supply Act is one of the cornerstone acts in the Legislature and is proposed by the government. If passed, this bill would give the government the necessary authority to implement the program it set out, fulfill its commitments and put the vision that the government has into practice. I'm going to urge all members of the Legislature, when the debate concludes, to support Bill 45 because, without this necessary spending authority, no government would be able to meet its obligations to the people of Ontario.

The government's spending authority for the current fiscal year is provided through the Budget Measures and Interim Appropriation Act, 2007, a special warrant issued on October 25, 2007, and a motion for interim supply. The interim appropriation act, 2007, was required because the previous Legislature had to be dissolved before it could complete the voting of supply.

Since the government's spending authority is intended to arise only under the Supply Act and any special warrants that are required, the proposed Supply Act includes a spending authority provided by the interim appropriation act and repeals that particular statute. Without this authority, the government would be unable to make most scheduled and unscheduled payments and implement the initiatives in its budget.

As you know, the Minister of Finance, the Honourable Dwight Duncan, introduced the budget of the McGuinty government's second mandate in this House on March 25, 2008. During the first mandate, the government managed to eliminate the previous government's deficit while investing heavily in health care, education and the province's infrastructure.

I'd like to share with the members of the Legislature the highlights of the government's plans to grow an even stronger Ontario. In a speech from the throne last year,



this government outlined a five-point economic plan. In the first budget of our second mandate, we're strengthening this five-point economic plan and implementing additional measures of interest of importance to the people of Ontario. Our plan calls for investing in skills and knowledge, investing in provincial infrastructure, lowering the cost of business, strengthening the environment for innovation and forming key partnerships to strengthen Ontario. Our plan strikes the right balance and enhances those public services that make Ontario the best place in Canada to live, to work and to invest.

Our plan undertakes initiatives for those sectors, communities and families that continue to face additional external challenges that have been well spoken of in this Legislature. Premier McGuinty is very fond of saying that for the economy to truly succeed, for Ontario to succeed, we need every Ontarian at their very best. Prudent planning is allowing us to invest in people while paying down debt and cutting the cost of doing business.

The fall economic statement of last year began to implement that plan, and our 2008 budget builds on those initiatives. Our five-point plan for the economy will strengthen the long-term economic productivity, stimulating investment and job growth today, and move us to a greener, more sustainable future here in the province of Ontario. The plan is as sweeping in its scope as it is balanced in its approach. In addition, the budget proposed a number of tax cuts and regulatory reforms to reduce the cost for business and enhance the quality of life for all Ontarians.

With the passage of this bill, we'll continue working together to build an even better future, a future that is as prosperous as it is inclusive, as sustainable as it is inclusive, and as full of hope and pride as the people of Ontario themselves. The resilience of Ontario's economy will continue in the future because of the ingenuity, perseverance and compassion of Ontarians. In 2007, stronger-than-expected economic growth of 2.1% occurred, despite a significantly more challenging external environment.

The government is investing in people so that Ontario can continue to compete. We're investing in skills and education so they have real opportunities for success. We've been getting great results during these past five years. Today, more than 90,000 more young people are going to college or university than just five years ago. Over 10,000 more young people are graduating from high school each and every year.

This government's \$1.5-billion, three-year skills-to-jobs action plan will train unemployed workers for new careers, expand apprenticeships, build more spaces in colleges and universities, and help students with their educational costs. Some 20,000 unemployed workers will get long-term training that launches them into new, well-paying careers through our new \$355-million Second Career strategy. The government will also expand apprenticeship programs, targeting 32,500 new registrants and apprenticeships—a 25% increase in just four short years.

This fall, we'll also provide a textbook and technology grant for about 550,000 full-time college and university students. Students from rural and remote areas will benefit from a new distance education grant to assist with their travel costs. And we'll help to build new and improved post-secondary and skill-training classrooms throughout this province through a \$970-million investment in new capital funding.

Skills are one component of investments in people. To ensure that Ontarians have an opportunity to be at their very best, particularly our children, a new cabinet committee on poverty reduction is working on a strategy that will see real results. As a start, to improve dental care services and make a difference in the health and well-being of thousands of low-income families, the government is committing to \$135 million over three years. To ensure that no child has to start the school day hungry, we'll provide nutritious food to thousands more children by doubling our investment in the student nutrition program over a three-year period. To help some 690,000 Ontario Works and Ontario disability support program recipients, our government will increase social assistance by another 2% in 2008 and 2009. This is in addition to the Ontario child benefit we initiated last year.

Our strong health care system is one of our key competitive advantages. It helps make the province an attractive place for business to invest and a place to create jobs. This government is building on the success of the last four years by continuing to invest in and improve universal public health care in Ontario. The government is committed to improving access to health care for all Ontarians.

#### 1550

We'll increase access by providing 50 more family health teams, particularly in rural and underserved communities, and we'll expand nurse-practitioner-led clinics by providing an additional \$38 million over three years for that purpose. Our plan calls for an increase in cancer screening—particularly something this House has called on for some time: to cover the costs of PSA testing—as well as extending the HPV vaccination program.

This government will continue to make record investments in education. Continued prosperity in a competitive global economy is absolutely essentially dependent upon a well-educated workforce. By making investments in schools and school boards, we've built a strong foundation for student achievement. In 2008-09, school-year grants for student needs funding, the cornerstone of education funding, will rise to an unprecedented \$18.8 billion. Since 2003, we've hired 9,000 additional teachers to ensure our children are doing better at school. Our investments and the hard work of teachers and students have resulted in remarkable progress. Test scores are higher throughout the province. More students are graduating, and more students are going on, whether it be college, university or apprenticeship training, than ever before in Ontario.



At the other end of the spectrum are our seniors. They've contributed so much to our success, but many of them are facing new challenges. This government is proposing a property tax grant to help low- and moderate-income seniors stay in their homes by assisting them with their property taxes.

The McGuinty government is already making the largest investment in Ontario's infrastructure in a generation, and we plan to do much more. The government has modernized schools, social housing, hospitals, roads, bridges, public transit, community facilities and our water systems. The 2008 budget includes an additional \$1 billion in investments in municipal infrastructure, \$400 million of that for much-needed improvements to our roads and bridge structure here in the province, all of that outside of the heart of the province for the economy in Toronto—\$497 million for public transit projects in the greater Toronto area and Hamilton and \$100 million for improvements to our social housing stock.

Perhaps our most important infrastructure undertaking is a new border crossing in Windsor. As part of the environmental assessment, the Detroit River International Crossing Study is expected to provide recommendations very soon on a new crossing and new access road. Ontario will fund its share of the cost of the proposed road link between Highway 401 and this new border crossing. Business and union leaders and others from right across the province want to get on with this project and so do we.

To compete in the global economy, we have to build on Ontario's creativity and innovation, and as a result, the government has committed nearly \$300 million for new innovative initiatives. The McGuinty government will provide \$250 million over the next five years to the Ontario research fund for investment in research infrastructure. To help launch the next wave of Ontario innovators, the Minister of Finance proposed a new, bold, 10-year corporate income tax exemption. This is unique in Canada, and we're extremely proud of this particular initiative. It's a new tax incentive for new corporations that commercialize research from Canadian universities, Canadian colleges and/or Canadian research institutes.

To help create more jobs and strengthen our northern communities, our investment in the Northern Ontario Heritage Fund Corp. will rise to \$100 million annually over the next four years. The government also recently launched the Next Generation of Jobs Fund to help innovative business grow and create new jobs. The fund is a \$1.15-billion investment to support companies and privately led groups whose products may, for example, reduce pollution, save energy, make transportation more efficient or cure diseases.

Surely this House would agree that Ontario is a great place to invest, and a great place in which to create jobs. We've made significant progress in reducing costs for Ontario businesses. As an example, just three months ago in his fall statement, the Minister of Finance proposed a package of business tax relief worth \$1.1 billion over three years. And to help encourage economic growth, the

minister is proposing in his budget a further \$750 million over four years in new business tax relief.

To help our manufacturers now—today—we're proposing a further retroactive capital tax cut for manufacturers and resource industries going back to January 1, 2007. This would entitle companies to up to \$190 million in rebates, which they can choose to put back into the economy. We're also proposing to enhance the capital cost allowance, saving Ontario businesses \$433 million over three years, and encouraging Ontario manufacturers and forest companies to invest in new equipment. In the 2008-09 budget, we're accelerating the business education tax cuts by four years so that northern business property tax rates will be at the maximum 1.6% by 2010.

This government is committed to strengthening our competitiveness in key economic sectors, including the mining sector. Mining has been one of Ontario's great recent success stories. So to encourage future growth, the government will invest \$20 million for geological mapping, and close to \$7 million to implement the Ontario mineral development strategy.

Ontario's forest products sector is the mainstay of many northern Ontario communities. Since 2005, our government has provided over \$1 billion in support to the forestry sector. To help address the challenges this particular sector is facing, the government proposed to reduce the stumpage rate for poplar hardwood, to encourage new investment and support our producers.

Despite a drop in visitors from the United States due to a strong Canadian dollar, Ontario's tourism sector has been resilient and tourism employment continues to grow here in the province. To help encourage further growth, the government is investing over \$110 million to strengthen and expand tourism here in Ontario.

We believe a competitive and healthy economy is a green economy, so we're increasing funding to fight climate change and provide funding for an environmental curriculum.

This supply bill is so very important to us to ensure that these programs, the initiatives announced in the budget, are carried out, and to ensure that we have the capacity so that we can manage to pay the folks that do the job here in this Legislature and for the people of Ontario. These are all critically important matters that we have to address.

There's much more that I would like to add if time permitted. I know that there are other members of this Legislature on all sides of the House who want to speak positively to this particular initiative in this particular bill.

So in conclusion, the Supply Act is one of the most important acts that can be proposed by the government in this Legislature. On behalf of the Minister of Finance, I'm going to urge all members of the House when the debate concludes to support the act—because without it, and without the necessary spending authority, no government would be able to meet our obligations to the people of Ontario.



**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson):** Further debate?

**Mr. Peter Shurman:** It is with great pride and honour that I rise today to make my inaugural speech in this chamber. I want to thank the people of Thornhill for the support and trust they've placed in me by electing me as their member of provincial Parliament. It is my intention to serve their needs to the best of my ability.

C'est un honneur et un privilège d'avoir l'occasion de vous adresser la parole aujourd'hui afin d'exprimer ma gratitude aux électeurs et électrices de la circonscription de Thornhill.

I also want to thank my predecessor, Mr. Mario Racco, for his service to Thornhill. On behalf of the people of Thornhill, I pay tribute to him for his service, and I wish Mario and Sandra all the very best for the future.

I would like to thank the Clerk of the Legislature and her staff, as well as my own staff, for their kind assistance and guidance in acquainting me with the Legislature and its procedures. This can be a daunting place when one first enters it—and, if I may be permitted an observation, a curious one, after several weeks of involvement in its daily workings.

I further congratulate Steve Peters on his election as Speaker of this Legislature. Though that took place in the initial and curtailed fall period, it is important for me to both pay tribute to him and to note that his role is fundamental in the protection of the spirit of democracy that drives us in this House. I wish the Speaker the very best as we go forward in this term.

1600

I offer my congratulations as well to all members of this great assembly on their personal victories back in October. One of the things I'm most cognizant of is the fact that although the three parties represented have significantly different views on how to improve our Ontario, no one could ever convince me that our wish to do so isn't always a common objective for all 107 members.

The people to whom I'm most indebted are my wife, Carole, my sons, Mike and Brian, and my broader family. I thank all of them. Their love and support provide me with great strength, and I am grateful that my wife is here with me today along with my sisters-in-law Morlyn Shurman and Marcy Tarder. I am honoured as well to have Eli Yufest, Peter Kent, Randy Spiegel, Yirmi Cohen, Rabbi Yisroel Janowski, with his wife, Chana, and his young son, Josh Cooper, and Marlene Gally and Richard Ciano here with me today, all important allies who became friends in the great journey to this place. I am also honoured to have Mr. Bob Bak and Mr. Ian Woo here, representing Thornhill's dynamic and growing Korean community.

Thornhill is a vibrant and integral component of the greater Toronto area. It is richly diverse in its population, and that provides the community with a remarkable resource and with exceptional power to achieve. We enjoy an excellent quality of life in Thornhill. However, if we are to continue enjoying the same standard of living in the future, vigilance is required. I'm proud to be here in

the Legislature to provide that vigilance on behalf of all the people of Thornhill.

Thornhill residents speak over 100 languages, and over 50% of the residences are owned or occupied by people whose country of birth was not Canada. If one could ever call any part of Canada the crucible in a grand experiment, Thornhill would be that place.

I ran for public office because I believe in a better Ontario. Je crois en un Ontario amélioré. I believe in an Ontario that respects our seniors, allows them to live with dignity and affords them a better quality of life. Je crois en un système de transport efficace. Je crois en un système de santé de qualité et accessible à tous les Ontariens. I believe in safe communities, in government that puts the rights of victims ahead of criminals and one that invests in safety and security as well as crime prevention. As Evelyn Scott once said, "A belief which does not spring from a conviction in emotions is no belief at all."

I assure this House and the residents of Thornhill that I have the courage of my convictions. As the member from Thornhill, I would like to take some time to talk about the concerns of my constituents. These are concerns I heard at their front doors and concerns that I am continuing to hear now. The residents in my riding are loyal to their community and they know its needs. They are looking for a government that is willing to act to enhance their quality of life. I believe, as do my constituents, that government must be concerned with the quality of life of the people it serves. Quality of life is what attracts people to a community and makes them want to stay and to call it home. It is about economic prosperity, cultural and recreational opportunities, community safety, timely access to quality health care and time spent with family and friends.

I am honoured to have Randy Spiegel from Zareinu in the gallery today. Zareinu is a day treatment centre and school for children with special needs in my riding. I have spoken about them in this House previously. Zareinu's mission is to improve the quality of life for each child and her or his family by providing the most effective and up-to-date therapies and learning strategies and, in that way, help each child to reach his or her maximum potential.

In 1999, the then-Conservative government allocated \$14.5 million for special-needs kids in private schools. It was an annual allocation and remains a budget line item today. I am told that due to an unduly narrow and technical interpretation of regulations by the ensuing Liberal government, only \$4.5 million of the \$14 million is being spent. I say, "Shame," and I commit to Randy this day that I will be your champion and fight for the rights of the special-needs children not only of Zareinu, but in my riding of Thornhill and all across Ontario.

Kids with special needs are not any less loved nor any less important nor any less deserving of what our Education Act guarantees to not some, but all, Ontario children. I was saddened that in the throne speech and in the recent budget, not only were the needs of the people



in Thornhill not met, but all Ontarians seem to be left out in the cold awaiting improvements we can make and programs we can fund. And I will work with all of my colleagues to deliver.

Ontario's economic challenges are not being taken seriously. We have gone from an Ontario that was once the engine of Canada's economy to, for the first time in 30 years, an Ontario whose unemployment rate exceeds the national average. Staying the course is steering in the wrong direction, for it leads to rocky shoals and treacherous waters. Disposable incomes in Ontario are growing but at a rate that is among the slowest in the country, and Ontario's business tax structure is the least competitive in all of Canada at a time when Ontario should be leading the way. Ontarians deserve better.

In my riding, the plight of our citizens in receiving equitable dollars for health care is significant, with the per capita gap down about \$200 from other Ontarians. We are in a high-growth area, and we are much too late already in addressing something that isn't being predicted; it's already here.

Infrastructure is desperately lacking: roads, a hospital, extended mass transit—not political promises to build these things, but legal commitments and shovels in the ground. And the funding must be predictable and must be ongoing.

Community safety, another issue of concern for the residents in my riding, is not even on the McGuinty radar. Might I remind the members opposite that finger pointing is no solution. Empty words and finger pointing are not appropriate forms of government action, any more than blaming a past over which your government has had the final say for what is now going on five years.

Health care is front and centre in Thornhill. While deliberating on what I wanted to say today, I was reminded of a Liberal government that promised a revolution—a revolution—in health care. The Oxford Dictionary defines the word “revolution” as “any fundamental change or reversal of conditions.” Another definition for the word is “a drastic and far-reaching change in ways of thinking and behaving.” Four and a half years later, while Ontarians are still waiting for the promised fundamental changes and far-reaching policies, we are hearing reports of queue-jumping, longer wait-lists for long-term care, and perhaps the most disturbing fact, that Ontario doesn't measure up to other Canadian provinces with respect to quality of care. In fact, you are more likely to die in an Ontario hospital than you are in Saskatchewan, British Columbia or New Brunswick. Recently, there were reports of people waiting in emergency rooms just to be seen, with several deaths recorded in what was dubbed the hall of shame.

I have spent many hours in my initial period as a member meeting with senior officials in hospitals, LHINs, medical agencies and with physicians themselves. I have heard an amazing and repeated statement: They say that if we were to show leadership and rebuild our health care system, the \$40-billion annual budget

could provide every Ontarian with the best health care money could buy anywhere in the world.

So again I say, “Shame.” Ontarians deserve better, and it is our job in this Legislature to ensure that all Ontarians receive the care they need when they need it.

Locally, the Liberal government has been dangling a carrot to the residents of my riding. That carrot is a new hospital. The residents in my community deserve more than a possibility; we need a plan to address their very real health care needs. With a full-blown study now completed, a letter of recommendation now submitted to the minister by the LHIN, and an endorsement letter from the Vaughan group driving this process in the minister's hands, we need immediate action. My constituents expect an announcement pertaining to a Vaughan hospital, and they expect it imminently.

In an EKOS poll conducted by the Liberal government, 97% of Vaughan residents indicated that building a hospital is exceptionally important for their continued well-being. In fact, according to my predecessor, 56% of Vaughan residents seeking in-patient acute care services travel to Toronto. Clearly, this is an issue of great significance to them and to me, and I intend to continue alongside my community, which has united in working to ensure that they are afforded the health care that they not only need, but deserve. They are Ontarians and they've earned it.

1610

Like many areas across the greater Golden Horseshoe, my riding and its neighbouring communities are expected to experience significant increases in population over the next 25 years. According to government estimates, the population of York region is set to grow to 1.5 million people by 2031, from 760,000 in 2001. During that same time period, the government predicts, as indicated in the 2006 Places to Grow plan, that the population of the greater Golden Horseshoe as a whole will increase by over three million people. In other words, Ontario's population is growing by leaps and bounds—a result of immigration. The individualism and determination of these new Canadians to succeed in their new lives here with us demonstrates how consistent their values are with our own. Their values are certainly representative of those of our PC Party and caucus. We believe that hard work should be rewarded, that good-quality jobs should not be beyond reach, and that quality of life is paramount. Individual risk and hard work are implicit in the experience of every new Canadian. Our job is to ensure there is a strong opportunity infrastructure to reward that risk and hard work.

I am sure this House will agree that quality of life does not include sitting in gridlock. Mr. Speaker, as you know, we are already experiencing tremendous gridlock on the streets and highways of the GTA. The fact is that there is really no good time to drive along any of this region's highways. Gridlock means lost money in our just-in-time economy. It also means lost productivity due to people arriving late for work—and this is unacceptable at any time, much less when our economy can ill afford pro-



ductivity losses. The 401 and the QEW are vital links between the GTA and the United States. The health of our provincial economy depends upon the efficient functioning of these corridors. Due to gridlock, the Ontario Chamber of Commerce estimates that \$5 billion is being lost from our economy every year—\$5 billion. That translates into lost jobs—the feeding of families—and tax revenues that we just don't get. Gridlock also means more air pollution due to idling traffic, and more stress on drivers. Perhaps most important of all, gridlock also means less time with our loved ones.

We need sound transportation planning, and we need it now, to address the problems that will accompany this inevitable growth. We need the province to ensure that the Greater Toronto Transit Authority, or Metrolinx, is given adequate power to guarantee effective coordination among transit providers to facilitate the movement of customers between jurisdictions, just like our counterpart major urban cities around the world. What we currently have in the GTA is a disjointed system of public transit, comprised of 12 fixed-route and specialized transit operators, including GO Transit. Too often, potential customers are turned off using transit because of bottlenecks at interregional transfer points. Public transit needs to be an attractive and affordable alternative to private automobiles, and we aren't there yet—not by a long shot. We continually tout the GTA as a world-class destination; well, we need a transit system befitting of that claim.

People want a quality of life. They do not want to be stuck in traffic or uncomfortably herded into subway cars or buses. They want to get to their jobs at a reasonable time and get home to their families at a reasonable time. I am reminded daily of the burdens that a long commute poses to my constituents. As an example, Elliott Silverstein leaves his Thornhill home at 6:30 every morning, he gets on the 404 and he drives south to Toronto. On a perfect day, he is stuck in gridlock traffic for an hour and a half. That is three to four hours a day away from his family. Again I say shame—shame that the government of this House has done nothing more than hand out platitudes and trumpet a transportation plan that may or may not be realized after the next election. I commit to Elliott and to all of the residents of my riding that I will fight alongside you to ensure that this government takes this issue of gridlock seriously and addresses this problem now, and not in 2011.

People also not only want but deserve to be treated with dignity. We want to feel that we are contributing positively to society. We want to be valued regardless of our age or ability. Across this province and across this country we are, in a word, greying. Unfortunately, all too often society's response to the concerns of the elderly has been to treat them with indifference, on some occasions, even disdain; and, worse still, as an inconvenience.

Every one of us, like it or not, will get old. Every one of us will experience age-related health and lifestyle concerns. I believe it is incumbent upon us in this chamber and for members of society to treat all seniors with the

same care and respect we want for ourselves and for our own loved ones. We are blessed with the privilege of living in a country that provides tremendous freedom and opportunity to its citizens. That privilege, however, came at a dear cost—a cost that was paid by generations that preceded us. We are but harvesters of the bounty they sowed.

Recently I lost my mother, who resided in a nursing home. She, like so many others, needed more than the standard of care provided. Our family was fortunate that we could provide that extra care and the resulting dignity. Not all families can.

This is my Ontario, it's your Ontario, and we can make it better. Becoming old in Ontario should not mean that you surrender your dignity as a human being. Quite the contrary: It should be a source of pride, born of the respect reserved for builders.

Issues such as transportation planning and long-term health care are central to the type of Ontario we want to have. Quality-of-life issues are extremely important to me and are the cornerstone of my decision to run for office. In fact, these issues become more central to my being in this place by the day. I believe that in deliberating the business of this House, we must ask ourselves if a particular policy or bill will actually improve the lives of our fellow Ontarians. That question needs to be answered with a resounding yes, and if that yes is not clear and strong, it means the policy needs to be reconsidered and reworked. It is our obligation to ensure what we do in this House is for the benefit of all Ontarians, regardless of party affiliation.

I look forward, Mr. Speaker, to working together with you and with my fellow members for the citizens of the great riding of Thornhill and of this wonderful province. It is both an honour and a duty I'll address with passion and conviction. To quote Helen Keller, "Alone we can do so little; together we can do so much."

Let me close by assuring the remarkable and incredibly diverse residents of Thornhill that I will be your voice in caucus and in this Legislature. I will represent your concerns and I will never forget that the good people of Thornhill sent me here and have legitimate expectations of me. I will not betray that trust.

**Ms. Andrea Horwath:** It's certainly my pleasure to make a few remarks on the debate today, which is, I guess, technically an interim supply motion, which gives the government its opportunity to continue to pay its bills. Of course, like anyone else around here, I would expect that the government would be paying its bills. It's not paying its bills in the way that we would like to see it pay its bills; the bills that they are paying are ones that we don't necessarily think are the biggest priority. That's how I'm going to focus my remarks this afternoon: in regard to the priority that the government has chosen to delineate versus some of the areas that I as a New Democrat, and my colleagues as New Democrats, think that they should have been putting more of their emphasis.



Mr. Speaker, you'll have to bear with me because I do have a bit of a cold today. For some reason I'm a little scratchy in the throat. If I start to lose my voice, I'll be turning things over to my friend Rosario Marchese from the riding of Trinity-Spadina.

I want to start off by saying that it was extremely disappointing to hear the leadoff speech from my colleague Michael Prue from Beaches-East York, who was on the finance committee during the consultation process on the budget. Of course, after that consultation process, after dozens and dozens of people and organizations had the opportunity to meet with the committee and talk about what they thought the priorities of the province of Ontario should be, highlighting for the government initiatives that could be undertaken to make life better for more people in the province of Ontario—it was a very diligent effort. Many, many people take hours and hours and hours of time to diligently prepare their briefs and to really do some heavy-duty analysis on the kinds of changes that can be implemented by government to make things better for the people of Ontario. And what happens? They go through that process, they have hours upon hours of public hearings across the province, and at the end of the day—you know, it would be sad if all that effort by all these community-based people ended up with some kind of short shrift by the government, where perhaps 25% or 30% of the recommendations were actually implemented or where they could pick and choose at least a few of the recommendations that came forward. We would be disappointed by that. I think that would be disappointing not only for those people who are watching that consultation process occur, but for those very people who were involved in it. But not a single recommendation from those people who were consulted by the government was implemented—not a single thing that anybody had to say, after hours and hours of input and discussion.

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I guess the governing Liberals figure that they've just got to get elected and then they have a free ride for four years. They have no obligation to listen to or hear or take input from the people of Ontario. They have no desire to have an ongoing dialogue with the people of Ontario to create the province that we all feel good about and feel proud of. They don't feel they have any obligation whatsoever to take that consultation and turn it into a living reality in terms of what people would like to see as incremental change in the province of Ontario. Instead, in their utter arrogance, they make no attempts whatsoever to even pretend that they're going to be implementing any of the recommendations.

In fact, what happens at the end of the day is that not only do they not take any single recommendation, not a one, but at the committee in terms of the report back to the Legislature—after the committee has done its work, it reports back to the Legislature and the report had a couple of recommendations from the committee. Of course, contextually, everyone must recognize—I know you know this very well, Mr. Speaker—that because it's

a majority government, the committee also has the majority of Liberal members on it. So at the end of the day, the Liberal members on this committee get to decide what recommendations go forward. None of the recommendations—from the people who came and consulted with the government and with the other members of committee over time—got approved.

But some of the opposition parties thought, "We can bring forward some of those recommendations. If the government hasn't really included them in their vision, then maybe we will amplify some of those issues and we will put recommendations for the committee to consider to bring back in terms of the budget." It's interesting, because there were—I can't even remember how many, but there were several recommendations brought forward by New Democrats and several recommendations brought forward by Tories. Of course, the Liberal majority voted down almost every single one of those recommendations, and the committee ended up only bringing four recommendations—and anyone on this committee can correct me if I have my figures wrong—that simply patted the government on its own back about having gone through the consultation, having put together a document that was pretty much ignoring everything they had been told or been consulted about.

It seems to me that it's a sad day in the province of Ontario when you raise people's expectations, when you invite them in for a dialogue and say, "Talk to us about what you think. Let us know what you think is a good thing for us to be doing. Let us know where you think we can make some improvements. Let us know how you, from your perspective as an Ontarian in this sector or that sector, would like to see things move forward, would like to see improvements in terms of the way we do things in Ontario. Whether you're from children's services, industry, social services, municipalities or wherever it is you're from, come in and talk to us." When at the end of the day it's all talk and no action—I don't think there was a rider on any of those invitations that said, in fine print, "Oh, by the way, we're not going to do anything you say anyway. We don't really want to implement any of your suggestions. We just want to play this game that we're pretending that we're consulting with you, that we're pretending that we give a darn about what you even have to say." I have to say: That is very, very poor in terms of a process, and it's very cynical. It's a very politically cynical move, that you actually raise people's expectations and raise their hopes and pretend that you're engaging them in a real dialogue, only to turn around and slam the door in their face and pretty much say, "Well, that was nice; it was fun. Glad you could attend. Here's your hat. What's your hurry? Off you go. We're really not going to do anything to bring any kind of change based on any of the comments you've made."

You've just spent hours and hours, and probably days and weeks, getting reports approved by boards of directors, if you're from the not-for-profit sector, after taking time away from whatever you're doing, in whatever sector you happen to be coming from, whether it's the



private sector or the not-for-profit sector; taking hours and hours away from your main mission, your main goal, your main work so that you can get your voice in there on behalf of the people that you work for or work with or provide services to. And you're going to have this big, huge impact because you're putting all these hours in; you're having to pull back from all of your other important work to get engaged in this process. And, lo and behold, the process yields nothing but a "thank you very much; not interested now" kind of response from the government.

We, as the NDP, actually had some ideas that we thought it was time for the government to turn its eye to. I'm going to raise some of them today because in the context of an interim supply motion, I think it's important to talk about where government should be putting some of its resources.

Coming from a city like Hamilton, it wouldn't surprise you that one of the big issues facing my community and facing many communities in this province is the loss of manufacturing jobs. I'm talking about 200,000 manufacturing jobs down the drain in the province of Ontario. I think it's really one of the most significant issues facing this province, and it has been facing this province for a couple of years. It's been facing this province, but there has been little to no attention whatsoever to that issue here in Ontario. It's absolutely poor that that has not in any way been resolved by this government, that this government refuses to implement some very tangible, very specific, very proven strategies to stem the bleeding of manufacturing jobs from communities like Hamilton, like Windsor, like many, many other industrial-type cities in Ontario.

Of course, we've heard as well and we've watched as well as forestry sector jobs have also left this province up in the north, so we see the devastation of communities that are manufacturing-based communities and we see the devastation of resource-based communities that's also been happening simultaneously in this province. We have seen some 18% of manufacturing jobs leave this province—18% of manufacturing jobs. That's \$6.6 billion of wages out of Ontario's economy, \$6.6 billion that's no longer circling in Ontario's economy.

It's interesting, because that has a significant effect on those communities. Imagine; any one of the communities that are losing these jobs in great numbers is losing that economic power that's going on; they're losing that trickle-down, if you want to call it that. They're losing that spending that then helps other sectors of the economy to thrive and do well. Coming from a city, again, like the one that I come from, that's always struggling, or has been recently—maybe "recently" is a bit generous; it has been for some time now—suffering in terms of its economic initiatives, particularly in the commercial area in our downtown, removing high-paid jobs in the community is simply just another challenge that our community cannot sustain for much longer.

When we look at the number of jobs overall in Ontario, we're looking at a figure of about 18%, as I

mentioned already. But in Hamilton—when you think of manufacturing as being the major employer for a city like Hamilton, that sector being the major employer—it's some 30%. Some 30% of the decently paid jobs in my city have been lost to a government's inaction. They've been lost because the government refuses to undertake specific initiatives to be able to stem these job losses.

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Those initiatives exist. In fact, my leader, Howard Hampton, and New Democrats have been putting those initiatives on the table for some time. We have been in the vacuum of inaction that the McGuinty Liberals seem to be content with. We have been bringing forward suggestions, recommendations. We have been showing the way. We have been guiding the government to look at other provinces that have undertaken some of these very initiatives and have been successful in them. And all we get back from the government are cynical snickers, finger-pointing and blaming of other levels of government, particularly the federal government, and then, "Woe is us. It's all the global economy."

That's not what they say in other provinces. In fact, in other provinces the provincial governments believe that they do have a role in job retention, in job creation and in saving important sectors like manufacturing and forestry—unfortunately, not so here in Ontario.

I already mentioned the 18% of jobs in terms of manufacturing. We've also had tens of thousands of jobs lost in the forestry sector. We've seen significant decreases in people's ability to earn once those jobs are gone. We know that the jobs that are replacing the jobs being lost in the manufacturing sector are not at the same wage level. They are not being replaced at the same benefit level—not at all.

I have actually had the opportunity to visit some of our unemployment adjustment centres in Hamilton that are there to help in the adjustment of workers once their plant is closed. I have to tell you, when you look at the job boards in those centres, there are no \$25-an-hour jobs; there are no \$18-an-hour jobs. There are maybe one or two \$15-an-hour jobs, and there are a heck of a lot of \$12-an-hour jobs, but people are being forced to take pay cuts because there simply are not the kinds of jobs available—of course, those \$12-, \$14- and even \$18-an-hour jobs don't come with the same kinds of benefits, don't come with the same kinds of pensions, don't come with the same kinds of dental and health care and all those other kinds of things that actually enable a person to have a decent quality of life and take care of their family. Those jobs don't come with that kind of security. It's shameful, shameful, shameful that our government is allowing the decimation of so many good, paying jobs in this province and is not prepared to do anything about it.

What can we do? We can do what other provinces have done. We can undertake initiatives like a manufacturing investment tax credit. This is a tax credit targeted specifically to the manufacturing sector.

My friend from Timmins—James Bay has already put on the table a private member's bill requiring a 50%



investment in Ontario contracts so that, for example, when any big Ontario project like buses or subway cars or anything like that is being undertaken, 50% of the value of those contracts needs to be kept here in Ontario. That is a tangible solution that has been undertaken in other jurisdictions and can be undertaken here. It should be undertaken here. Why should we be paying for these big-ticket items and not making sure that some of our people actually benefit from them? It seems like something so simple, and yet the government has not agreed to, or is not supporting, the idea of the 50% contract value staying in Ontario. A Buy Ontario program is simply not in the cards, unfortunately.

Similarly, there has been a lack of investment in other adjustment funds that come from other levels of government, particularly the federal level of government, to make sure those workers are retrained. I know the government is saying, "We've got a great training program, it's over the next several years, and it's got all these bells and whistles," but the bottom line is that for many years now there has been little to no reinvestment in training. The reality is, all of that time has gone by and all of those workers have suffered and very few of them have been able to get new jobs.

The list goes on and on in terms of the things we would have liked to see. I've spent a heck of a lot of my time talking about the job issues because they are so important to my community.

One of the other issues we felt very strongly about, and still do, is the whole area of dignity for our seniors in their most vulnerable years, as they age and go into long-term care. New Democrats have been calling for some time for a minimum of 3.5 hours of hands-on care for every person living in long-term care. The government's response, unfortunately, was a pittance; the government's response in their budget was six minutes. So right now it's about two and a half hours. We're saying we need 60 more minutes; we're saying we need three and a half hours per day. The government says that six minutes is fine. We think it should be 10 times the amount that the government's putting forward. We don't think it's acceptable that people are sitting for hours and hours in incontinence products with that lack of dignity, with that physically horrible situation. We don't think that's all right. In fact, we think it's all wrong and that it needs to be addressed by this government. Unfortunately, they didn't see their way to helping out our most vulnerable seniors in the province of Ontario. Instead, we had a minister who made light of the subject and who joked about it. We don't think that's funny; we don't think that's funny at all. In fact, it's an embarrassment to this government that that could have happened—to see someone make light of a situation like that.

In Hamilton, I actually had an opportunity to attend a long-term-care centre myself during the campaign. There was a gentleman there who took me aside, and he was practically in tears talking about the indignity of his life. This was a guy who had worked all his life in the steel mills, who had worked very, very hard. He provided for

his family, and now he's in long-term care. He's fairly immobile. All his faculties are with him, but he's not in a good physical state. Here is this guy brought to tears over the lack of care in a long-term-care centre. This minister and this government not only think it's something that's worthy of a joke, but also something that's only worthy of six minutes more of care? There's something wrong with the government with that kind of a priority, I would submit.

The other issue we are really concerned about, of course, is the issue that continues to be on the front pages of the paper today, and that's the issue of making sure that we have people who are being paid a decent wage in this province. We believe that there needs to be an immediate increase to the minimum wage in Ontario. We don't think waiting for another three years for it to get to \$10 an hour or a little bit more is good enough. In fact, on this very day, if you're making \$10.25 an hour—which is what the government wants us to get to at some point in the future—you're at the poverty line or you're just below the poverty line. What kind of a solution is it to poverty? This government talks about setting up a task force and targets for poverty reduction. Well, heck, poverty reduction is about income, but you're not prepared to set a minimum wage that keeps people out of poverty? Somebody could be working a full-time job at minimum wage and still be living in poverty? A lot of those workers are women, and they're working in retail. In some cases they're working more than one job, sometimes two or three jobs, just to try to make ends meet. That is unacceptable in a province of such wealth as the province of Ontario.

There are many other things that we would have liked to see but we still don't see. One is a commitment to more affordable housing, because everyone knows that if this government wants to continue to have people living in poverty by not ending the national child benefit claw-back or by keeping the minimum wage very, very low, then at the very least your biggest expense should be something that you are able to afford. The biggest expense, of course, for everyone—generally speaking, anyway—is your shelter cost. Does this government have a wholesale plan to build more affordable housing so that people can actually afford their housing costs, so that if their housing cost is tied to their income, then you will know that they're paying a certain amount, maybe 30%, maybe 35% of their income on housing, but that gives them the ability to buy food and to do other kinds of things, to give their kids a decent pair of shoes or a winter coat? No. There's no affordable housing. There is not a single dime for new, affordable housing in this budget.

That brings me to another issue where there is not a single new dime—and it will be the last one I speak to, because I know I have to leave some time for my friend from Trinity-Spadina—and that's the issue of child care. This budget does not have a single line in it for new child care investment. In 2003, the McGuinty Liberals were going to be investing in child care; they were going to



invest \$300 million of provincial money into child care. They haven't invested a dime of provincial money into child care. Yes, they're flowing through some federal dollars. Is it going far enough? No. A couple of months ago, we saw huge exposés in the Toronto papers about the quality of child care that families are forced to rely on in this province because there are not enough licensed, quality child care spaces out there. So parents are forced to rely on all kinds of types of cobbled-together care. They're going to unlicensed facilities and they're going to casual relationships to try to get the child care that they need. That's not a way to deal with making sure that our children get the best start that they can in life.

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They like to talk a good talk. They have good rhetoric around early child learning; lots of good rhetoric. But when it comes to actually putting the dollars in place, when it comes to putting a system in place for child care—you know what? In Quebec, they've had a system of child care for quite some time. In Quebec, \$7 a day is what parents pay for child care. In Quebec, up to about \$2,000 is the maximum annually that a family pays for child care for one child. You know what those numbers are in Ontario? In Ontario, \$16,000 to \$18,000 per child is what families are paying for child care. That's what families are paying for child care in Ontario if they're lucky enough to actually get a child care space. Waiting lists are sometimes two and three years long to get their child into child care. In some places, you're lucky if you can even get your child into child care before they're already in school.

Don't talk a good talk about child care and early learning and how this is going to prepare our children to succeed in school. Don't bring up the statistics about health care, jobs, economy and all of these flowery words and then not invest in early learning and care. How can you make sense of anything like that?

There are many, many more issues that I can raise, but I really think it's time that I take my seat and leave the rest of the time to my friend Rosario Marchese, who's going to be bringing up some other issues. Thank you very much for the opportunity.

**Mr. Reza Moridi:** It's a great privilege as a newly elected member of the Legislature to stand here, where so many distinguished Ontarians have stood before. I feel honoured and humbled to be able to serve the residents of Richmond Hill, who have shown their confidence in me and in our vision of Ontario. With that trust comes a duty to serve not only Richmond Hill but all Ontarians. I am here to reassure you that I will fulfill that duty every day as a member of this Parliament.

Richmond Hill is one of the fastest-growing municipalities in Canada, where many industries and businesses are helping to build and expand its economy.

Richmond Hill is a multicultural and diverse community. Its ethnic population is growing and evolving. Over 50% of its population was born outside of Canada.

Richmond Hill is a beautiful town that has hundreds of acres of green space. Oak Ridges moraine and the green-belt form part of the town of Richmond Hill.

Richmond Hill has been home to the David Dunlap Observatory, which was established in 1935 on a 200-acre parkland located at the heart of the town. The observatory is home to the largest telescope on Canadian soil.

I was born and raised in the ancient city of Urmieh in Iran. I was the first in my family to finish high school and then graduate with a bachelor, two master's degrees and a doctorate. I went on to conduct research in nuclear physics, electronics and materials science, and later won awards and was elected to the fellowship of prestigious scientific and engineering institutions. I published numerous scientific and technical papers and reports and spoke at over 40 international conferences held around the world.

I taught at colleges and universities. As an administrator, I worked in the capacity of chief scientist, vice-president, department chair, dean of the school and chief librarian. As a business executive, I travelled internationally and conducted numerous business negotiations with senior executives of the world's leading manufacturers in the electrical field.

In my life, I have also experienced a revolution and a war. My family and I survived the Islamic revolution and the Iran-Iraq war, though hundreds of thousands did not. My family and I fled Iran in 1987. On midnight of February 9, 1990, when we landed at Pearson airport, we found peace, security and dignity in this wonderful land. Since then, my family celebrates both July 1 and February 9 as our Canada Days. This is why I ran for office: I wanted to give back to the country that welcomed me as well as over 150,000 Iranians over the past 30 years.

Albert Einstein once said, "Only a life lived for others is a life worthwhile." So as the first Iranian Canadian ever elected to an office in Canada—

**Mr. Shafiq Qaadri:** And in America.

**Mr. Reza Moridi:** —and in America, it is with pride that I stand here before my fellow members of this Legislature today, the product of struggle, immigration, hard work, endeavours, vision and imagination. Once again, Albert Einstein said, "Imagination is more important than knowledge."

My wife, Pari, and my son, Mike, are sitting in the members' gallery. They, with my daughter, Michelle, and her husband, Frank, and their daughters, Sabrina and Sara, my mother and late father, have all been sources of inspiration and support in my life.

As a parent and grandparent, I believe that the preservation of the environment we share and the universal health care system we rely upon are the keys to a better future. As a business executive, I know how important it is to ensure that the tools are there for our entrepreneurs to succeed, not only in Ontario, but internationally. I understand the importance of an efficient infrastructure, sound government policies and knowledgeable and



skilled civil servants and workforce in enhancing the international competitiveness of Ontario.

I believe that the vitality of our society and its economy is dependent on the continuous flow of electric power in our power systems. It is imperative to assure investors that Ontario will have a reliable and dependable electricity supply and infrastructure at all times. I am pleased to see that ensuring a sustainable supply of electricity to our homes, businesses and industries is one of the top priorities of the McGuinty government. I am also pleased to see that our government has a comprehensive energy plan where electricity generation from burning coal will be phased out and coal will be replaced by sources such as hydro, wind and nuclear.

Jonathan Swift once said, "Vision is the art of seeing things invisible." As an academic and educator, I believe that children shape the future of our community. Our children's future is created by the quality of education that they receive. I understand the importance of early childhood, elementary, secondary and tertiary education in enhancing the international competitiveness of Ontario. William Yeats once said, "Education is not filling a bucket, but lighting a fire."

As a scientist and engineer, I believe that the economic prosperity of a society is a direct product of its scientific innovations. The growth and increase of Ontario's scientific innovations will empower us to become one of the most economically vibrant regions of the world. Ontario, through its diversity of talents, in all areas of science and technology, has tremendous potential for scientific innovations. I believe in creating an environment in Ontario that will put it in the forefront of scientific innovations in the world.

My riding of Richmond Hill mirrors the diverse and dynamic population of our beautiful province of Ontario. We are on a road of sustainable economic development. We are facing different kinds of challenges, especially under the environment of a globalized economy, a stronger Canadian dollar, higher oil prices and the slowing US economy.

Ontarians are hard-working people. We strive to remain competitive with our strengths in mind, our strengths being our diverse, skilful and knowledgeable workforce and our capability to adapt and to innovate. Our large pool of immigrants from different countries is a great asset to our competitiveness in the global market. The McGuinty government has been active in creating significant investments towards enhancing our competitiveness, adjusting to global restructuring, creating high-value, next-generation jobs, and ensuring long-term success for different sectors of our industry.

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I believe the McGuinty government's positive thinking and forward-looking strategy will continue to move Ontario forward under the global economy. I am certain that with the great leadership of our Premier, the Honourable Dalton McGuinty, we can each do our part to make sure that the province of Ontario continues forward to even greater levels of prosperity.

Mr. Speaker, please allow me to share with you and this Legislature my dream for Richmond Hill and York region. As you know, the population of York region is close to one million and is rapidly growing. The population of York region is more than the population of each of the Maritime provinces, and almost equal to the population of Manitoba and Saskatchewan. Yet York region does not have a university. York region students are forced to travel a long way to Toronto or other cities to attend university. York region deserves to have a university of its own, and Richmond Hill is the ideal town to host this university.

I am very proud and privileged to represent such a vibrant and diversified riding as Richmond Hill.

**Ms. Sylvia Jones:** I find it interesting that we are speaking today on the interim Supply Act. As you know, the motion will essentially give the government the right to send out the money that we have promised to their partners—hospitals, municipalities, colleges and universities. How appropriate, then, today that our Progressive Conservative caucus raised a number of concerns about how the McGuinty government distributes funds to their partners during question period.

I use the word "partners" carefully, because it is the McGuinty government who likes to say that they are partners with their funding agencies. For most of us, a partner make us think of fairness and equity—respect, even. From listening to some of our partners, I'm left with the impression that it is, in fact, not a partnership at all, but rather a relationship where funding agencies are kowtowed into submission under the threat of funding being pulled, and concerns ignored.

I raise, as one example, the now infamous surplus announcement one week before the announcement of the budget. I'm sure you all remember it: If the budget had a surplus of more than \$800 million, then municipalities would be able to receive a portion of the surplus to use on infrastructure projects throughout Ontario. The problem is, seven days later, the McGuinty budget gets announced and—surprise, surprise—the anticipated surplus will be \$600 million for the next year and zero for the following two years. So there will be no money for municipalities' infrastructure. And after getting municipal mayors and councillors cheering the initial promise, they are once again holding an empty bag filled with empty Liberal promises. Some partnership.

And don't take my word for it. Let me quote from Mark Ostrowski, vice-president of the Dufferin Federation of Agriculture. Mark said, "Farmers are facing challenging times, lots of problems."

The list is long. Take livestock—cattle and hogs. Ethanol uptake has increased the value of crops, which has made feed more expensive. At the same time, the Canadian dollar's strength is devastating industries that rely overwhelmingly on exports to the United States. Then there's BSE—mad-cow disease. The US closes its border to our beef for a while, as did Pacific Rim importers, and the effects are still being felt. Crops might not be in as tenuous a position were it not for last year's



drought. There is also the fact that urban sprawl is reaching north, driving up land costs for any young farmers wanting to start out. Then there is the pressure of imported goods from countries with lower labour costs and less stringent regulations on things like pesticides.

Ostrowski says that agriculture has relied on government income stability programs in the past, but those have been changing under this government and aren't working well. He says that taxes are up, labour prices are climbing, and the bureaucratic burden has only increased. I couldn't say it better myself.

And what is this government doing for their agricultural partners? Let me tell you: not much. During the ROMA conference in January, I had an opportunity to sit in on a meeting with the Minister of Agriculture and the warden of Dufferin county and a number of rural mayors from Dufferin. They were meeting with the Minister of Agriculture to brief her on an innovative new proposal they are putting together for a parcel of land in North Dufferin. It will tap into some of the emerging technologies related to our energy demands. The proposed Eco-Energy Park would see the county develop a 200-acre parcel that they already own to develop an eco-energy park that would include composting, thermal treatment energy from waste, anaerobic digestion, an eco-energy development facility, greenhouses and other agricultural uses. Very exciting and forward thinking on behalf of the county, I'd say.

I don't think there was any doubt that we have a demand for energy that isn't going to be eliminated any time soon in Ontario. We have heard empty promises coming from the other side of the House to eliminate coal-fired plants, but the shutdown date has changed three times now.

This brings us back to the meeting at ROMA. The Minister of Agriculture was being briefed by the good people of Dufferin county when she interrupted the briefing and asked what they were there for. Well, as you can imagine, that threw the mayor of Shelburne off. We know you don't get a meeting with these ministers until the staff know exactly what the meeting is about. Regardless, when Mayor Crewson explained that they were planning to submit a proposal for funding under the rural economic development fund, because the proposal would involve additional jobs for rural Ontario, the response back was, and I'm quoting here, "Well, that's a bit rich, don't you think?"

I don't know what constitutes jobs in the minds of the McGuinty ministers, but I can tell you that jobs in rural Ontario are shrinking because of the policies of this government, and any incentive where our municipal partners can tap into emerging technologies that bring jobs and stability to rural Ontario is a good thing. What was most disturbing about the meeting was the complete dismissal that any municipal government could possibly come forward with a creative idea to help their community and build energy for Ontario. It was impossible for them to imagine—shameful, really. I know the municipal leaders in Dufferin and Caledon well enough to realize that one

meeting with an uninterested Minister of Agriculture will not discourage them from moving forward with their plans. I look forward to encouraging them, and ultimately inviting the Minister of Agriculture to the official opening so she can see for herself a bit of Dufferin ingenuity. As a side note to this story, the technology has begun to be used in Ottawa, but perhaps the city of Ottawa is considered a partner in McGuinty's Ontario and Dufferin-Caledon is not.

The other area on which we have heard many announcements is of course health care. The doctor shortage has hit us all, in every part of the Ontario, and nowhere more acutely than in rural and northern Ontario. According to the latest information from the Ontario Medical Association, Ontario is short in excess of 2,000 doctors, leaving approximately one million adults and 130,000 children in Ontario without access to a family doctor. In Shelburne, Dr. Vanderburgh announced his retirement this month, after serving our community so well for many years.

Once again our municipal partners have had to step in and try to solve the problem by building turnkey clinics and spending municipal and fundraised dollars to recruit and retain family doctors. Does the McGuinty government acknowledge this? No. Instead, they announce family health networks where nurse practitioners are supposed to play an active role as one of a number of health care professionals. Great idea, to be sure. It is why our previous Progressive Conservative government introduced the use of nurse practitioners. But now the Minister of Health is announcing them so fast that there is a shortage of nurse practitioners. In the Dufferin family health network, there is an opportunity for four full-time positions. Not one of those positions is filled—not one. Why? Certainly not because Dufferin or Caledon isn't a great place to live, work and raise a family. Why? Because you can make all the announcements you want, but if you don't have the professionals to fill the roles, they are going to remain empty, and once again your announcements mean nothing.

If I can leave your partners with a fair warning, under Dalton McGuinty's Ontario, announcements don't always translate into action.

1700

Again, I'd like to quote from the new president of the Greater Dufferin Area Chamber of Commerce on last week's budget. The president, Ron Munro, stated in the Friday edition of the Orangeville Banner that he sees nothing to help the area's many small businesses.

"Incentives and so on ... don't find their way down to our level," he says, speaking as a small business owner....

"It hasn't been a pretty picture in Dufferin," he says of the area's economic picture, particularly in the manufacturing sector. "Any reduction of tax or no increase ... is a good thing."

There are so many other quotes, from the local mayors to the hospital to others from the chamber, but the consistent theme is that more information and more detail is needed. If you truly want to partner with your transfer



agencies and, more importantly, the people of Ontario, what they're looking for is planning and vision, neither of which we are getting from this second-term government.

**Mr. Rosario Marchese:** I'm happy to speak to this particular issue today because there are so many issues to talk about. I don't know how I'm going to do it, but I'm going to try. It's 5 o'clock and we have 17 short minutes, but we'll try to pack it in, because this government is so, so pleased with itself as it talks about all the great things they do.

I want to start talking about post-secondary education for a few minutes. In my view, we have a big problem in this particular area, where the government and the corporate sector together are saying that we need to have an educated workforce. The government says, "Great God, look at all the students we've got in the university sector. They're coming by the thousands. Every year there are more and more. We can barely accommodate them. And even though we don't put in the money, we're so proud of the fact that so many more are coming to the university sector. We believe this is going to make us competitive in the world, because an educated workforce is not only good to the individual but to society." And I agree. But let's look at the investments of the Liberal government.

We are number 10 in terms of per capita funding in Canada when it comes to provincial funding. We were number 10 under you guys, under the former Conservative regime, and we're still number 10 today. How could that be, you say, when the government claims they're giving \$6 billion, which they announced a couple of years ago, over a four-year period? If they're giving \$6 billion away, surely all of our educational problems at the post-secondary level would be gone, yet we are still number 10 in per capita funding. Eastern provinces give more to their students than Ontario, which still remains one of the wealthiest provinces in Canada. How can it be, you say?

**Mr. Mike Colle:** It's our money.

**Mr. Rosario Marchese:** Because it's our money.

*Interjection.*

**Mr. Rosario Marchese:** Right. The pecunia. The Liberals say, "The reason why all the provinces can now do it is because they're taking our money." It's a legitimate argument, and it's a good argument. Is it enough for the Liberals to say that, because of that, therefore we're not getting enough? No, obviously not. Because the Liberals then counter, "But no, we're giving six big billion dollars to the post-secondary education level."

*Interjection.*

**Mr. Rosario Marchese:** But you argue that that's a law.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson):** Member for Eglinton-Lawrence, you're not even in your seat. I think you know better.

The member from Trinity-Spadina.

**Mr. Rosario Marchese:** Speaker, it's okay. You have to be flexible in the chair. Don't be so rigid. This is a family issue here. We're all in the same boat, so to speak, as it were, from time to time.

They say, "Even though we're giving all of our money so the eastern provinces can give more to their students, we're still giving so much away." If that is true, how come we're still number 10, numero dieci, numéro 10, at the bottom of that funding barrel? It must mean that maybe the money isn't as real as it appears. Maybe the money is simply announced as big, big bucks. Because when somebody says "\$6 billion," you say, "Holy cow; \$6 billion." That allows the Tories to salivate, thinking, "My God, we can attack them because they're spending so much money." But the real fact is, it's just an amount that's thrown out: "We're giving billions away." So all the journalists say, "Oh, they're giving \$6 billion away. It's pretty good." But nobody says, "Why is it that we're at the bottom of the barrel in terms of funding?"

We are in last place, and we have the largest class sizes in the country in our university system—the largest. But the Liberals never talk about that. No, they talk about their \$6-billion investment. We also have the largest professor-student ratio in the country: 26 to 1 versus an average of 20 across the country. Liberals never talk about that. Does it affect quality? I believe it does. If you've got 19 or 20 students in another university where they're taught by one professor, presumably the professor has more time to be with that student. The more students you've got, the less time the professor has. Moreover—

**Mr. Shafiq Qaadri:** A higher professor-to-student ratio is good because it's more professors to students.

**Mr. Rosario Marchese:** My good colleague the doctor says that you've got more professors per students. No, mon ami; that is not the case. What is the case—I'm not sure I know. When it comes around to your turn, you can just clarify, of course.

We have fewer professors than are required, and the reason why we have fewer professors in the system is because we are not hiring to the extent that we should. We are short of professors and we're not hiring. When we are short of professors, what we do in order to fill in the void is we hire part-time professors, as we do now and we've been doing for quite some time. Half of our college instructors are part-time. How can that be? Half of our professors at the college level are part-time, yet some of them carry the load of a full-time professor. But they're not available to students, because they have to teach in different colleges, and therefore it affects the quality of that education for that student. It means that that professor isn't as well paid as he or she should be because they are part-time. The reason why colleges and universities hire part-time professors is because they want to save money, because if they are full-time professors they need to be paid benefits, you understand.

We've got a poor university system that has been whacked by successive governments, including this Liberal regime, which claims that it's doing better.



We now have a student body that's paying more for tuition than ever in the history of this province. Why is that? Why—

**Hon. Madeleine Meilleur:** Don't you think it's normal, Rosie?

**Mr. Rosario Marchese:** Do I think it's normal? No, it's not normal.

In Quebec, the highest tuition fee that is paid is \$2,200. There are no deregulated programs in the province of—

*Interjection.*

**Mr. Rosario Marchese:** "Because we're paying them." Yeah, right. Yeah, we're carrying everyone now.

The sensible excuse for Liberals is, "We're carrying the rest of Canada." They provide these programs. Remember, Quebec has been providing child care—and I will get to that in a little bit—for quite some time at \$7 an hour. I'll get to that in a minute.

**Ms. Andrea Horwath:** Seven dollars a day.

**Mr. Rosario Marchese:** Seven dollars a day. What did I say?

**Ms. Andrea Horwath:** "Hour."

**Mr. Rosario Marchese:** An hour. Seven dollars a day.

**Ms. Andrea Horwath:** That's their minimum wage.  
1710

**Mr. Rosario Marchese:** I'll get to that in a minute.

In Quebec, there are no deregulated programs. That means if there is a student who wants to become a lawyer, the highest fee is \$2,200. Do you know, mes amis les libéraux, what we have to pay here in Toronto to get into law school? How much?

**Hon. Madeleine Meilleur:** It's \$3,300.

**Mr. Rosario Marchese:** No. It's \$17,000, \$18,000, \$19,000 and rising. How do you feel about that?

Of course, once these lawyers get out, they have huge debts. So they're all getting into corporate law, I suspect, because that's where the big bucks are. No one's going to go into some nice little social organization and make \$70,000, because when it's time to pay their debt, which is close to \$100,000, they won't be able to do it. They won't be able to get married and have children, they can't do it, so they get into corporate law.

Do you know how much doctors are paid? To become a doctor, how much is it a year, mon ami le docteur, monsieur le médecin? How much?

**Mr. Shafiq Qaadri:** About the same: 200 grand.

**Mr. Rosario Marchese:** About the same, right? Can you believe that: \$17,000, give or take? This is just tuition, because you've got to buy your own books. By the way, the Liberals just said, "We've got a treat for the students now. They're going to get a \$150 allowance for books." Yeah, man, this is good stuff. This is big. This was supposed to be a big announcement by the Liberal government. Monsieur le docteur, ils coûtent combien, leurs livres, plus ou moins?

**M. Shafiq Qaadri:** Presque 150 \$.

**Mr. Rosario Marchese:** Exactly. More or less, give or take a couple of cents, about \$150. So for someone

going to law school or medicine or business school, the big allowance is \$150. And the Liberals presented it as if this is really, really great.

It's funny, but it's so hard to keep it up, right? I mean, how much can I laugh at this, day in and day out? I can't: \$150.

I've got seven minutes left and I've just talked about post-secondary education. We could still go on, on this issue alone. Every year we're falling further and further behind.

On the housing front: Monsieur le ministre of Housing today, as indeed the Premier the other day, keeps saying we're giving \$100 million for housing, and makes it appear like this is going to build housing. It's not.

Toronto Community Housing is getting, of that \$100 million, \$35 million. It will not build one unit of housing. It's all about repairing the housing stock. Understand, mes amis les libéraux, that some of that public housing is 40, 50 years old. It needs to be repaired. The cities are broke. Now they're charging user fees, and they have to tax this and that in order to make ends meet. They are broke.

**Hon. Madeleine Meilleur:** Why are they broke?

**Mr. Rosario Marchese:** Why are they broke? Because, mon amie la ministre, the money isn't flowing from the provincial government as much as it used to.

The fact of the matter is that \$35 million is going to go for housing, and all it does is a repair job. Many of the people living in Toronto Community Housing are saying, "We need \$300 million as a minimum to do essential repair"—\$300 million, and they got \$35 million. But to hear the Minister of Housing and the Premier, they're giving millions for housing, meaning that they are going to actually construct housing. You can't do it. That money they're giving is not about building housing; it's about repairing the existing housing stock, which is totally inadequate.

On the housing front, I know the Liberals will get up and say, "Oh, we're doing so much. I know it's hard but we're giving," and then the Liberals say, "But we could do more and we will. We will."

Mind you, there could be another recession coming. Nobody wants it, of course. There may be a slowdown, but if there is, "We will do our best," because that is what Liberals do. "We'll do our best. We've given a few bucks, and of course we could do more. If there's a slowdown, we'll deal with it, and then when we recover we'll open the doors again"—that kind of stuff. It's just exhausting. Do you hear my voice? It's exhausting; I get tired.

**Hon. Madeleine Meilleur:** You know the feeling, eh, Rosie?

**Mr. Rosario Marchese:** I do know that feeling.

We were talking about child care the other day because this is a very important issue for many of our friends. The member from Hamilton Centre introduced Bill 26, which would restrict new child care licences to not-for-profit operators while renewing licences for existing for-profit operators, meaning that the existing for-



profit operators would be grandfathered, but we would not allow the big monopolies, the one that's coming from Australia, to come in and make money on children. We will not allow that, so says Bill 26, introduced by my friend and colleague from Hamilton Centre. We think this is a good idea.

Further, the Liberals in 2003 said, "We're going to spend \$300 million on child care." When you hear that number, you say, "That's a lot." For the Tories, they're going to say, "My God, they're wasting so much money." But for some others, they will say, "It's \$300 million; that's a lot." People like me and people like my friend from Hamilton Centre wait for that announcement to unfold. That \$300 million is a fair chunk of change, and so we say, "When is it coming?" and it never comes.

At the end of the four-year Liberal term, the Liberals, just before an election, announce that they're going to put in 25 million bucks, which is what they put in. It has been reannounced in this budget, and that's all they've done on child care—25 million bucks. But to hear the Liberals, they're spending millions and millions on child care. Those numbers mean nothing; that money is not real. It's just an announcement: \$300 million.

So we expose that problem but, other than doing our best, what can we do? People still elect the Liberals; that must mean they like them. It must mean they like their child care plan that doesn't do anything; it must mean that they like nothing. It must mean that they like just a little bit, but maybe not too much. It must mean that they probably believe the Liberals when they say, "We'll do more. We've got a couple more years—just wait."

If Quebec can offer seven-dollar-a-day child care to the non-profit sector to provide child care, which provides care for two thirds of all children in Quebec, why can't we do it? Quebec has been able to do it all these years—a province that's not that far away. We can get there easily by train, by bus, even by plane, if we had to. What do we have? Only 12% of our children are in licensed, non-profit child care. That's it. How could we be proud of that? Oh, I see: We're giving all of our money to Quebec. I get it; I understand.

Tuition fees: Quebec is able to keep its tuition fees down at \$2,000. I see: We're giving all of our money to Quebec. So they do all of these progressive things and all we can say is, "Yeah, but we're giving them all of our money." It's just not good enough.

My time has run out. I just don't get it; it's as if I just began a couple of minutes ago. There's so much to say. I wanted to talk about the Buy Ontario policy that we believe is a powerful tool to keep jobs in Ontario. We were saying to the Liberals, "Buy Ontario as it relates to transit is a good thing. Keep jobs in Ontario." We can't convince Liberals, though. I don't know what we have to do to convince Liberals.

I urge people watching: Keep tuned. There's so much to learn. We will reveal as much as we can as we go.

**Mr. Dave Levac:** The segue is beautiful because I wanted to remind people about the very impassioned speeches from both the members from the third party

who talked about child care can with so much passion. I don't question their desire to make sure that kids get child care; I understand that. It's not just the child; it's about the parents, the families and the pressures of day-to-day living. I want to start by acknowledging their genuine concern for the issue.

1720

But let's set the record straight. We offered and did create 22,000 new, affordable child care spaces across Ontario. What was the NDP voting record on that particular initiative? They voted no.

*Interjections.*

**Mr. Dave Levac:** They voted no. We built 4,276 new spaces in Toronto. What did they vote? No. On 1,232 new spaces in Hamilton, how did they vote? No. Over 3,000 new spaces in northern Ontario—how did they vote? No. On 389 new spaces in London, how did they vote? No. On 780 new spaces in Ottawa, how did they vote? No. On 722 spaces in Windsor, how did they vote? No. A massive investment of affordable child care for Ontario, housing, and for our kids—and let's go back to their record when they were actually on this side making decisions about child care. They cut 6,000 new subsidies when they were in power. I rest my case.

What are we talking about? We're talking about the NDP. They're supposed to say what they're supposed to say, what it always is for the 10 people sitting over there. It's the government on this side—and we can interchange it; PC, Liberal, it doesn't matter. They say we're not doing enough over here or we're not doing anything. That's what they're supposed to say; they've done a good job.

What about those guys over there? What are the Tories over there supposed to say? "We need to cut—cut taxes, cut taxes, cut civil servants, cut civil servants." But very importantly, what do they say next? "But give my riding \$300 million; but give my riding \$30 million; but give my riding this."

What do we now learn by what we've just heard from the speeches over there? We've learned a really simple lesson, a very simple lesson. If we've got both those parties on the left and the right saying that we're not doing a good job, we must be doing pretty good. Why? Because we've offered a balance. We've seen the record of eight years of cut, cut, cut; slash and burn; scorched earth process and policy; belittle all the civil service. And what did we get? We ended up having to recover from it and doing all the things we need to do in order to bring balance to this place. That's exactly what's happening.

But what are we really talking about? What are we really, really talking about? We're talking about the Supply Act. Every single government of all political stripes on this side has to offer a bill called the Supply Act in order for us to do the business of the government. That's what we're debating right now. If we want to move that, we urge the members to support the bill. You know what? I'm guessing that all the members on that side are going to vote for the bill. Why? Because they know it's a government process that we have to go through in order to take that budget money and do the



business of the government. So what do they see this as? It's an opportunity to whack—what's the gopher whack game?

**Interjection:** Whack-a-mole.

**Mr. Dave Levac:** All right.

Let me tell you some things that have happened in my riding that I'm happy that the budget covered. Roads and bridges—a \$400-million share. In Brant we got \$2.95 million to help with roads and bridges downloaded by the previous government. The previous government downloaded all those bridges and roads. In rural Ontario, by gosh, what happened? We found out that there are a lot of bridges in rural Ontario. There are a lot of roads in northern Ontario. There are a lot of roads in southern Ontario. But it's rural Ontario, and now we've put in \$3.95 million. In Brantford we got \$1.24 million. That's a pretty good budget.

Affordable housing rehabilitation: Contrary to what my friend said—at least he gave us credit for saying that we had to fix the infrastructure that was left behind. You've got to fix those buildings. It's useless to have extra stock and continue to build more when you let the old stuff fall apart. So what did we get? In Brantford we got \$884,000 to help reconstruct those old houses.

One of the things that doesn't get covered very much, and I'm going to say it nice and loud and proud: We're going to cover prostate inspections. I think that's a great thing. The PSA tests are going to get covered. Those things cost up to 80 bucks a pop now. That's expensive. We're going to cover that for men over 40. That's great. I love it.

The MIII, the municipal infrastructure investment initiative: Brant, \$3.48 million for Highway 54, the downloaded road that the Tories did; Brantford, \$3.5 million for Henry Street upgrade improvements; assistance for seniors to stay in their own homes, \$250, up to \$500 to get a tax credit; child dental benefit; Ontario child benefit, \$250 up to \$600, soon to be \$1,000. It's endless.

There's good stuff happening here. It's balanced, it's measured, and it's done without trying to sit back and say that we've done nothing. It's done without saying, "On the one hand we want you to cut taxes and get rid of the civil service, but in my riding we want you to give us lots of money." That's not going to happen either. What we're trying to do is find a balanced way to present the budget of Ontario, and I think we've done that.

**Mr. Bill Murdoch:** I'm glad to have a little bit of time to talk about the budget and how this government likes to get its good news out. I did finally get a copy of the list after six days of asking this government for it. Earlier in the day, I did make a mistake, and I'll admit it. I went after Mr. Caplan. It is Mr. Bradley who should have been giving us this; it came out of his office. But you would think they would know in their own cabinet what they're doing, but obviously the infrastructure minister doesn't know that the MTO is giving out infrastructure money; you could tell by his answer. I guess they don't get

together too much in caucus and tell them what they're doing.

I'm pleased to be able to brag now, six days later, after the member for Huron-Bruce bragged of \$18 million. Boy, lo and behold, we got over \$18 million in Grey and Bruce too. So isn't that pretty good—a good-news story that you guys messed up. But why would the Liberals mess up a good story like that? Because they didn't want us to know about it. They couldn't get something right. You would think that the Liberals would know by now that when they have a good story they should get it out there. But no, they had to keep it secret right till the very last day, because this is the last day they could put this money into the other accounts. This is the end of the budget and they have to get their slush money out there.

I'd like to mention that Arran-Elderslie, which is a municipality in my riding, got \$786,235. In your riding, Minister, Blue Mountain got \$771,000, plus another \$2 million for a connecting link. They are good-news stories that they don't want out in the media. Bruce county got over \$3 million. Chatsworth, a little municipality, got \$1,620,000; Georgian Bluffs, \$1,154,000. Grey county got over \$4 million, Grey Highlands almost \$2 million; Hanover, \$112,000, and then they also got an MIII grant, which is all the minister of infrastructure seemed to know about. Meaford got over \$1 million; Northern Bruce Peninsula, over \$1 million. Owen Sound—they won't be as happy as everybody else—only got \$332,000, but it is on roads and they may get some connecting link money. South Bruce Peninsula got almost \$1 million; Southgate, \$1.5 million; and West Grey, almost \$2 million.

I'm pleased that they finally got the list out that we've been trying to get from this government since last Wednesday, when the announcement was made that they were going to put all this slush fund money out there. It's disappointing. You try to work with the government but when it comes to some good news they don't want anybody else to share with it. They can go over there and brag about the great budget they have, but they want to keep it to themselves. They don't want anybody else to know about it.

Our privileges have been taken away from us in this House, and I'm glad that the Speaker who was sitting this afternoon raised that point and told them and actually gave them a bit of a scolding about it, which they should have. Our municipalities can use this money for roads and bridges, and when this kind of news goes out, everybody in this House should have a chance. The NDP, the Conservatives and the Liberals all should have been able to have a chance to bring the good news. Unfortunately, the Liberals in this case took a good-news story and made it negative in not allowing the rest of us to know about it until six days later. That is sad, and I'm ashamed of that government over there. They should do better, and hopefully they've learned their lesson, although they've been here for four years; you'd think they would have known that.



As I said, it should have been the Minister of Transportation we talked to today. Maybe he would have told us at the time, but I doubt it.

**Mr. Shafiq Qaadri:** With reference to the supply bill regarding the budget, I come to praise the budget, not to hurry it. I would say, first of all, that our extraordinary commitment to health care in this province is something that not only the McGuinty government and the McGuinty vision and the Liberal brand should be proud of, but something I think that can be a leadership to North American jurisdictions such as Massachusetts and New Jersey, who are slowly but surely trying to implement some aspects of the universal health care coverage system. You'll know that our budget, with regard to health care alone for 2008-09, is something in the order of about \$11 billion more than when we initially took office. Of course, that kind of resourcing, that kind of equipping of the health care system, is diffuse with regard to things like cataract surgeries and angiography, which is a way of visualizing your heart arteries, knee replacements, angioplasty or heart-type surgeries, cancer surgeries and so on.

1730

But first of all, I just wanted to recognize a very important aspect of this which perhaps might get buried and not receive its due attention. That is the approximately \$150 million to be spent over the next three years with reference to the treatment, detection and facilitated treatment of breast, cervical and colorectal cancers, and, in particular, something that I think has been very well-addressed in this budget, the fact that we will now be paying for annual screening for men for prostate cancer, the PSA test. This, as you'll know, is the most common cancer affecting older men in Canada today. It actually has a mortality rate only second to lung cancer. I think it's extremely important that individuals who are hearing this particular message—of course, in consultation with their family doctor—avail themselves on an annual basis of this particular test. You'll know, for example, that the honourable Allan Rock, at the time one of Canada's federal ministers, was diagnosed, essentially because of this simple PSA annual blood test, with prostate cancer at the age of 54.

I think that's why we, as a government, as citizens and sometimes as patients, should support runs—for example, Harry's Spring Run-Off, which is to take place this Saturday in support of prostate cancer and prostate cancer research. I'll quote from some of the individuals who are involved with that particular run, because I think they've said it well: "Sadly, many people don't realize that prostate cancer is the most common cancer in men and the second most deadly, after lung cancer. With this run, we hope to change that. Our goal is not only to get the message out about the disease and the need for early testing in men, but to raise as much money as possible for research, so we can find a cure and save lives."

This government has heard that kind of messaging. This government has responded on a broad framework, a broad matrix of resourcing and equipping the health care

industry. I'm particularly proud, as you might appreciate, not only in my capacity as the MPP for the great riding of Etobicoke North but also as a medical doctor, to be part of this McGuinty vision.

**Mr. Garfield Dunlop:** I'm pleased to rise this afternoon on the supply debate. I too, like Mr. Murdoch, wanted to put on the record, because I'm just today getting the clarification of the announcements—I'm pleased to see these announcements, but on the other hand, I also know that the taxpayers of the province of Ontario are paying another 41% more towards this government's spending. They've increased spending 41% in five years. When you think that we took from Confederation to 2003 to get to \$67 billion, and now we're at \$95 billion, it's unbelievable. Where are we going with the way they're spending? It's out of control.

So it is nice when we are enabled to get some of the money back that our taxpayers are paying in. We have to remember that this money is not the money of the Liberal Party of Ontario. The money they're giving out is the money that's going back to the residents of the province of Ontario. They've already paid for it—the businesses, etc.

But I wanted to say that under the municipal infrastructure investment initiative, the town of Midland is getting \$3.57 million for a library addition; the city of Orillia, \$900,000 for roads; the town of Penetanguishene, \$1.5 million for Church Street; the township of Ramara, \$600,000; and the township of Tiny, \$196,000 for some water treatment work in LaFontaine. I'll lump the county of Simcoe in that as well. The county of Simcoe is getting, for county road 44 in Ramara township, which is an extension beyond the casino—and of course the casino provides a lot of money back to the province of Ontario, so it is nice to see that that road will be fixed up; I forget how many million dollars a year the province is taking out of the casino—\$1,250,000.

Under the transportation announcements today, which were actually announced on the 25th, last week, the town of Midland will receive \$329,000; the city of Orillia, \$517,000; the township of Oro-Medonte, \$1,622,775—that's a huge township with hundreds and hundreds of kilometres of roads; the town of Penetanguishene, \$214,000; the township of Ramara, \$674,000; the township of Severn—that's the township I live in—\$1,222,000; the township of Tay, almost \$494,000; the township of Tiny, \$1,619,000; and the county of Simcoe—which I'll also take credit for, Mr. Speaker, since you're in the chair—\$2,730,000 towards the county roads.

The county has already increased their spending. Believe me, they know how to increase spending in the county of Simcoe.

**Mrs. Carol Mitchell:** What do you mean by that?

**Mr. Garfield Dunlop:** Their budget is now at \$460 million this year.

*Interjections.*



**Mr. Garfield Dunlop:** I believe that the county's running some of their departments properly. There are other areas I believe they're not doing quite so well.

**Mrs. Carol Mitchell:** Can we quote you on that?

**Mr. Garfield Dunlop:** Yes, you most certainly can. I think a lot of people would look at the way their taxes have gone up in the county and would agree with me. Anyhow, we're working on all those things.

What I really wanted to say today, not strictly on the budget, but I had an announcement here in the House last week. I had a group of people down from the west end of my riding, the Penetanguishene and township of Tiny area. They're excellent people. What we're doing is we're trying to get a really good jump start in this part of the province on the 400th anniversary of the coming of Samuel de Champlain to the province of Ontario. That event will take place in the year 2015. Already, this particular year, in the city of Quebec and the province of Quebec, they're having their 400th anniversary. They're spending literally tens of millions of dollars on that anniversary.

There are a number of things I wanted to put on the record that I want the province to follow through on, and I'm trying to do this in a non-partisan manner. I'm trying to do it with the federal government and the province of Quebec as well. We have a long way to go. It is seven years away, but I want this to happen, and I really hope all members of this House would be supportive of provincial investments in the 400th anniversary of Champlain coming to Ontario.

I want the House to:

—recognize that the year 2015 will mark the 400th anniversary of the coming of the French explorer, founder and father of Canada, Samuel de Champlain, to Ontario;

—recognize that the site of Champlain's arrival on August 1, 1615, at the Huron village of Toanche in what is now the township of Tiny near the town of Penetanguishene, was marked by a cross and that cross still exists to this day, although it's in a poor state of affairs;

—recognize that Samuel de Champlain made numerous recorded visits to other aboriginal communities throughout the region, including what is now the city of Orillia, and it is marked by an historic monument;

—recognize that the coming of Champlain to what is now Ontario represents the forging of a very rich and historic cultural heritage that belongs to all Ontarians;

—recognize that the government of Quebec, in conjunction with the government of Canada, following earlier and similar celebrations in the Maritime provinces, is commemorating Champlain's arrival in that province this year and has designated substantial sums of money towards a year-long observance of the event. The investment is resulting in a very positive impact on the tourism industry and cultural interest in Quebec;

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—recognize that the Ministry of Tourism, the Ministry of Culture—and I'm glad to see that the minister is here

today; I've already chatted with her about this—the Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs and the minister of francophone affairs, in conjunction with the government of Canada, should undertake immediate plans to celebrate the fast-approaching 400th anniversary on August 1, 2015, of the coming of Champlain to Ontario, on a very large, historically and culturally significant scale;

—recognize that the government of Ontario should undertake to contact the government of Quebec to begin a close collaboration with respect to the observance of this event;

—recognize that the government of Ontario and the ministries should consult widely with various relevant historical and cultural associations to strive to keep the heritage of Samuel de Champlain alive;

—recognize that the government of Ontario should consider the site of Champlain's arrival as a prominent landmark. I have to also recognize that the first mass west of Quebec was held in the community of Toanche on August 12, 1615.

I also think we should try to recognize a Samuel de Champlain month federally and a Champlain day provincially as we approach that day.

I know I'm speaking on the supply bill, but I really wanted to put this on the record today because I think this is an important date that we really have to support financially. I think we've got some strong opportunities here for economic and cultural growth in our province as a result of this. This is going back to the very beginning of exploration in Ontario, and there are some real opportunities here.

I wanted to thank, in particular, my assistant in my office, Gaggan Gill. She has put a tremendous amount of time into the coordination of this. Gaggan has worked with my office and Alex Roman from Frank Klees's office and talked with all the folks in my riding, sending resolutions back and forth. I really do appreciate the fact that she's put a lot of work into it.

I just want to sum up by saying that this is an opportunity I don't think we can miss out on. I hope that, as we proceed over the next couple of years, there will be some strategic planning and some really good money set aside to celebrate this very special day as we move forward in the history of our great province.

**Mrs. Carol Mitchell:** I'm very pleased to rise today, and I will be supporting the supply vote that's coming very shortly.

Let's set the record straight. This budget represents three back-to-back balanced budgets, which has not been done since 1908. That is 100 years. We talk about transparency, we talk about investments in our communities, but we've done it by balancing the budget.

Did we go to Magna? No. Did we have a fulsome discussion on the budget? Yes, we did. Not only did the finance committee go out and consult with the good people of Ontario; the Minister of Finance also did. He had numerous meetings throughout the province; he wanted to hear from everyone. It was such an opportunity, and they appreciated it so much. From all of those



recommendations, we see a budget that not only is balanced, but it reflects what the people of Ontario want today.

One of the things I want to talk about—there's so much to say, so little time. One of the things I want to be heard on the record is that the comments made from that side of the House about agriculture—my goodness, have they not read any of their papers? They need to hear what the president of the Ontario Federation of Agriculture—I encourage you to read your farming magazines. There are numerous ones. Better Farming: I encourage you to pull out a copy and give it a read.

Geri Kamenz: "The McGuinty government has proven its willingness to address agricultural crises through contingency funding in recent years and we believe the government will continue to be there for Ontario's farmers."

There's more. I encourage you. Come on, read those agriculture magazines. Get those farm magazines out.

One of the things I would be remiss in not telling the House and reporting on: How did this budget affect Huron–Bruce? Let's talk about that for just one minute. One of the things that is important to my riding—and you won't remember this, but this is connecting links. I still have three roads left that you didn't download when you were in government. Yes, download—didn't even ask; just did it. Never even consulted. That's how they treated their partners.

**Mr. Jeff Leal:** That was the who-got-done-in committee.

**Mrs. Carol Mitchell:** Yes, the "Who does what?" It was terrible for rural communities: never consulted, never asked; just downloaded.

But what did this represent for our connecting links? Some \$1.6 million to the municipality of Saugeen Shores; \$200,000 to the town of Goderich. That's our connecting link. But now let's talk about the \$400 million that was committed for roads and bridges. What did that dollar figure represent to the riding of Huron–Bruce, the most rural riding in Ontario? Some \$18.5 million. I tell you, the constituents of Huron–Bruce were very pleased when they heard the news. Contrary to what the member for Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound says, since we represent similar ridings and share a county, I can tell you that in my meeting with the Bruce county councillors, they were very pleased with the dollar figure. Unfortunately, he wanted to get out there and share the good news. Who wouldn't want to share the good news on a wonderful budget like this?

But there's more: MIII—we love our little acronyms. What does this represent? Sometimes I think we lose sight of what infrastructure means. We bandy that word around, but do you know what infrastructure means to my riding? Infrastructure means new water mains in the town of Walkerton. That's what that means to my riding of Huron–Bruce. When I think of the commitment that was made through MIII, \$10.5 million, that means \$29 million—sorry, \$31 million. I forgot my connecting links. Thirty-one million dollars came into the riding of

Huron–Bruce. So I say to you that we didn't get here overnight, did we, Rosario? Did we get here overnight? No, we didn't—10 long years with the previous government. They weren't in the pothole business. That's what our federal counterparts will tell us today. Well, who is? I tell you, we've got to look after our roads. I've had phone calls from my farmers. Do you know what my farmers tell me? My farmers tell me that if that bridge isn't fixed, they can't get their product to the mill. What happens then? We understand. We get it. We delivered.

I just want to congratulate the member for Thunder Bay–Atikokan, because one of the things I heard repeatedly in my riding was about PSA testing. Two private members' bills and this member's hard work: He delivered. When I was out campaigning, people would say, "Why do you test the women but you don't test the men? Why should that be?" Do you know what? They're right, we're right, we're all right. Good budget, solid budget. We look forward to many more years in government.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson):** I thank the honourable member for Huron–Bruce for her contribution to the debate. The time for debate has expired.

Mr. Gravelle has moved second reading of Bill 45, An Act to authorize the expenditure of certain amounts for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2008.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, please say "aye."

All those opposed, please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it. It's carried.

*Second reading agreed to.*

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson):** Pursuant to standing order 63, this bill is ordered for third reading.

## SUPPLY ACT, 2008

### LOI DE CRÉDITS DE 2008

Mr. Gravelle, on behalf of Mr. Duncan, moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 45, An Act to authorize the expenditure of certain amounts for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2008 / *Projet de loi 45, Loi autorisant l'utilisation de certaines sommes pour l'exercice se terminant le 31 mars 2008.*

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson):** Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried. Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

*Third reading agreed to.*

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson):** Orders of the day.

**Hon. Michael Gravelle:** I move adjournment of the House.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson):** Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

This House is now adjourned until tomorrow, Tuesday, April 1, at 1:30 p.m.

*The House adjourned at 1750.*



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Brownell, Jim (L)	Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry	
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<b>Cansfield, Hon. / L'hon. Donna H. (L)</b>	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	Minister of Natural Resources / ministre des Richesses naturelles
<b>Caplan, Hon. / L'hon. David (L)</b>	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal / ministre du Renouvellement de l'infrastructure publique
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Hudak, Tim (PC)	Niagara West–Glanbrook / Niagara-Ouest–Glanbrook	
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Klees, Frank (PC)	Newmarket–Aurora	
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Kwinter, Monte (L)	York Centre / York-Centre	
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Leal, Jeff (L)	Peterborough	
Levac, Dave (L)	Brant	
MacLeod, Lisa (PC)	Nepean–Carleton	
Mangat, Amrit (L)	Mississauga–Brampton South / Mississauga–Brampton-Sud	
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Martiniuk, Gerry (PC)	Cambridge	
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of Ontario

First Session, 39<sup>th</sup> Parliament

Assemblée législative  
de l'Ontario

Première session, 39<sup>e</sup> législature

**Official Report  
of Debates  
(Hansard)**

**Journal  
des débats  
(Hansard)**

**Tuesday 1 April 2008**

**Mardi 1<sup>er</sup> avril 2008**

Speaker  
Honourable Steve Peters

Président  
L'honorable Steve Peters

Clerk  
Deborah Deller

Greffière  
Deborah Deller



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## LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 1 April 2008

## ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 1<sup>er</sup> avril 2008

*The House met at 1330.  
Prayers.*

### MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

#### ENVIRONMENTAL CLUB OF CAMERON STREET PUBLIC SCHOOL

**Mr. Jim Wilson:** I rise today to pay tribute to the environmental club of Cameron Street Public School in Collingwood for receiving the Lieutenant Governor's Ontario Heritage Award for Youth Achievement in natural heritage.

Made up of 15 students from grades 3 to 8, the club has taken a leadership role at the school and in the community, organizing a variety of activities to not only raise awareness, but also help the environment. Among other things, the club holds a litterless lunch once a week, walk-to-school Wednesdays and a school-wide recycling program. They also provide mentoring services to younger grades by leading initiatives such as a kindergarten class composting program.

Environmental awareness and action can never begin at too early an age. The work the club has done thus far is representative of the students' incredible dedication to the environment and indicative of a sense of civic duty that is well beyond their years.

On behalf of all of the residents of Simcoe-Grey, I want to congratulate the Cameron Street Public School environmental club for receiving this very prestigious award; it's the first time it's ever been received in my riding. I want to thank their principal, Mike Giffen—who, by the way, used to work for me—their teacher, Ruth Hall, and all of the club members for improving our environment and for setting an excellent example for all of us to follow.

Congratulations, too, to their parents and to each and every student. May all schools adopt this program.

#### RIDING OF OAKVILLE

**Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn:** This past weekend, I had the pleasure of being a part of two great events in Oakville.

On Friday, I hosted the Kevin Flynn 10-pin Challenge as part of the Big Brothers and Big Sisters Bowl for Kids Sake campaign. It's the biggest fundraiser of the year.

This fun event not only raised awareness, but also raised over \$16,000 for Halton Big Brothers and Big Sisters.

I want to highlight that Big Brothers and Big Sisters are people just like you and me. They're regular people who volunteer to share a little time with a child or with a young person in need. I want to encourage all members of this House to think about getting involved as Big Brothers or Big Sisters themselves.

On Saturday, I attended and served as the MC for the second annual Sydney Clark Fundraiser for Sick Kids Foundation. Two years ago, young Sydney fell into a coma. Later, she was diagnosed with Reye's syndrome, which is a very uncommon and deadly disease. She was transferred to Sick Kids, where, under great care and after significant work, she made a full recovery.

The event was called Do You Believe in Magic? It was a great evening. It was attended by the president of the Sick Kids Foundation and Sydney's doctors and nurses. This year's event raised over \$43,000 for the Sick Kids hospital foundation. As the event coincided with Earth Hour, the Clark family made sure that their event would celebrate that as well.

I congratulate all those who made these events possible and who work so tirelessly to strengthen the great community of Oakville.

#### ASSISTANCE TO FARMERS

**Mr. Tim Hudak:** Sadly, the closure of the CanGro Foods canning facility in St. Davids, in Niagara, which was to be effective yesterday, has jeopardized the livelihoods of some 150 pear and peach growers in the region and will soon, sadly, put more than 100 plant employees out of work once the final canning projects have been completed. This facility had been a leader in North America—in fact, the only canning facility in Canada this side of the Rocky Mountains—one of the latest victims of Dalton McGuinty's high taxes and high energy policies.

This, I remind members, is an industry still reeling from the closure of the Cadbury Schweppes plant in St. Catharines in June 2007, and the closing of a local processor's sweet cherry operation this past year. As a result of these three lost businesses, farmers are now being forced to pull out or find a new market for as much as 3,700 acres of peaches, pears, sweet cherries and grapes.

The Premier has become an absentee landlord when it comes to the greenbelt. If the Premier wants to freeze the



farmers' land under the Greenbelt Act, then he must make every effort to help farmers find a profitable market for their product. The federal government recently came forward with over \$20 million to help with a transition program. Sadly, the province has not brought forward their share of that funding program. Anyone can draw a line on a map and call it a greenbelt. It takes real leadership to make the investments to make it a success and support our local farmers.

#### COMMUNITIES IN ACTION FUND

**Mrs. Laura Albanese:** On Sunday, March 30, I had the pleasure of attending a championship awards ceremony for a basketball tournament in our riding of York South-Weston. I was delighted to witness over 180 young athletes participate in the basketball tournament, and thrilled that our government had a part to play in making this event a success by providing funding to the tournament organizers, the Ogaden Somali Community Association of Ontario, through the communities in action fund. This fund, from the Ministry of Health Promotion, enables community associations to provide programs and remove barriers to participation in organized physical activities.

Organized sports bolster confidence and provide alternatives for young people who are looking for things to do outside the home and outside of school hours. Competitive sports like basketball and soccer give young people a great opportunity to work together as a team and to build their self-esteem.

The communities in action fund promotes healthy lifestyle choices. In the case of the young people participating in the Ogaden basketball tournament, instead of being sedentary and playing video games or watching TV, or being on the street, the youth were in a safe, social and community setting. I want to commend the tireless dedication of parents, coaches and volunteers, who create and run these programs and help remove the barriers that prevent or discourage youth from participating in physical activities.

#### ONTARIO ECONOMY

**Mr. Garfield Dunlop:** As you know, Mr. Speaker, we've just finished having our 2008-09 budget introduced in this House. One of the things that I found incredible, when you review some of the things that happened in the past, was that from the year 1867 to 2003—136 years—we got the budget from zero to \$67 billion. But do you know what? In the last five years, from 2003 to 2008, we've raised the budget another \$29 billion. It's now at \$96 billion, an increase of 41%.

I say to you, is the environment clean, for the 41% increase? I don't think so. Are there enough family physicians? It's worse than ever. Are our farmers prospering? Absolutely not.

I know we have kids being shot in our schools, but are there enough police officers? Likely not.

Is our economy strong? Absolutely not. We've lost 200,000 manufacturing jobs in the last three years.

This government has to rethink everything they're doing. They're an overspending, Liberal free-spending government—overtaxing the general public in this province. Start spending your money wisely.

1340

#### CLIMATE CHANGE

**Mr. Peter Tabuns:** Last summer, the Premier announced the climate plan but in fact provided none. The government has not been open about its lack of a climate plan. Thus, we on this side of the House are forced to look for clues, to paw through the entrails to find out what's going on.

On March 7, the total of eight months since the Premier's campaign statement of a climate plan, the Toronto Star reported that the Liberals will set up a climate secretariat in April, "a small guerrilla outfit with strong vision that can drive through ministries," a source said."

The announcement was bizarre on two counts: first of all, the strange image of a group of bureaucrats rumbling through the halls here, late at night, checking to see whether deputy ministers have been good boys and good girls, delivering on climate events, and retreating during the day to their forest redoubt on Philosopher's Walk. It just doesn't give us a sense of someone really running things. The second point about this that's bizarre is that there would be no climate change plan for that secretariat to work with. None has been announced. The Minister of the Environment was asked by the Globe and Mail last week when the climate plan would come out, and he said, "Two or three months from now."

On top of all that, there's no indication in the budget of actual forward motion on climate change, no indication that the funds will be there to meet the targets that were set, as inadequate as they were.

The Premier has now had the promise of a climate plan hanging around for nine months. He has to treat the issue with the moral urgency he claims it has.

#### BLUEBERRY PICKERS

**Mr. David Ramsay:** As many in this House would know, for years, many hard-working families in northern Ontario have been supplementing their incomes by picking blueberries in the summer.

In the summer, all along the major highways of northern Ontario—Highways 11 and 17 in particular—these families set up stands or just sell out of their cars their harvests for a six- or seven-week period. Some sellers-brokers are also bringing these berries down to Muskoka berry stands, and from time to time there have been attempts to bring these down to the Toronto market.

Four years ago I was approached with the idea of creating a co-op that would bring order and certainty to selling the blueberries by providing a consistent supply to

the Toronto market over the busy berry season. Today at 4 a.m. I toured the Ontario Food Terminal with Dan Spiegelman, who approached me with this idea. Dan—for 40 years—has experience there at the Food Terminal, and everyone I met down there knew him. Ontario's premier fruit and vegetable market woke up this morning and began its day that early. The wonderful work that goes on there distributes our fruits and vegetables to all our retailers right across this province. I talked to some of the brokers, who were very interested in featuring this natural product from northern Ontario into the south.

In the coming weeks, there will be local meetings occurring throughout the area of northeastern Ontario to see if the pickers want to adopt this sort of system. I'd just like to say that I support this idea and I hope that this goes ahead. I think it would be another economic opportunity for a lot of our hard-working families.

### ONTARIO BUDGET

**Mr. Dave Levac:** I'm happy to have the opportunity to speak today about the good news the recent provincial budget and various other programs have provided to the riding of Brant.

Since I was elected, I've worked very hard to improve the quality of life for the residents of my riding. I'm very proud to have announced last week that our government is coming through and keeping its word.

Our government will be investing \$1.5 million in Brantford and \$3 million in Brant on repairs to roads and bridges through the Ontario highway program. I've spoken often about this issue, and now the riding will have the much-needed funds so that local officials can start to fix up the downloaded roads and bridges that connect our communities in a way that is safe and efficient.

In addition, the municipal infrastructure investment initiative—MIII—brought to Brantford and Brant valuable funding to work on water and sewers, roads and bridges and libraries, just to name a few. To highlight, my riding will be receiving \$3.5 million towards improvements on Henry Street, a very important road in Brantford, and nearly \$3.5 million to rehabilitate the downloaded Highway 54 in the county of Brant to help families and goods get to where they're going safely and efficiently.

Also, in terms of community and social services and of children and youth services, the riding of Brant will be receiving over \$250,000. Together, Brantford and Brant received nearly \$100,000, the Six Nations received \$85,000, and the Mississaugas of New Credit received \$68,000, to help these communities maintain a good quality of life.

I'm particularly proud to be part of this government during this time when the riding remains healthy and strong. Premier, ministers, I thank you and the residents thank you. We appreciate it.

### ONTARIO BUDGET

**Ms. Leeanna Pendergast:** I rise today to thank the McGuinty government for its investment and continued support for students in the riding of Kitchener-Conestoga. I've committed 20 years of my life as a vocation to students in school.

Despite all adversity in their lives, students come to school, and when students come to school hungry, it's heartbreaking. This government's \$32-million commitment to student nutrition, doubling over three years, and its partnering with educators, parents and school boards continues to move us forward toward a goal of increased student achievement.

The third party has called this budget an "Oliver Twist budget." As a teacher of literature, let me remind you that Oliver Twist ended up with everything in the end, and he left his society a better place to be. I quote Charles Dickens directly from chapter 53: "Oliver's warm and earnest heart ... linked together a ... society whose condition approached ... one of perfect happiness as can ... be known" in this ever-changing world.

### ROYAL ASSENT

#### SANCTION ROYALE

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** I beg to inform the House that in the name of Her Majesty the Queen, His Honour the Lieutenant Governor has been pleased to assent to a certain bill in his office.

**The Deputy Clerk (Mr. Todd Decker):** The following is the title of the bill to which His Honour did assent:

Bill 45, An Act to authorize the expenditure of certain amounts for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2008 /  
Projet de loi 45, Loi autorisant l'utilisation de certaines sommes pour l'exercice se terminant le 31 mars 2008.

### LEGISLATIVE INTERNS

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** I'd just like to introduce our new group of interns. With us today in the Speaker's gallery are the 2007-08 legislative interns. They are Ryan Cookson, Sabrina Hoque, David Michon, Kayla Monteiro, Aamir Taiyeb, Matthew Thornton and Judith Wong. Would all members please join me in welcoming our interns to the Legislature.

*Interjection.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** My apologies to intern Katie Robb.

### VISITOR

**Hon. Sandra Pupatello:** It's really my pleasure to introduce Tyler Wiles, who is sitting in the gallery today, the president of the college student alliance from St. Clair College in the great riding of Windsor West. I'd appreciate if we would all help welcome him here today.



## INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

### EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS AMENDMENT ACT (RAISING THE MINIMUM WAGE), 2008

#### LOI DE 2008 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LES NORMES D'EMPLOI (AUGMENTATION DU SALAIRE MINIMUM)

Ms. DiNovo moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 49, An Act to amend the Employment Standards Act, 2000 / Projet de loi 49, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2000 sur les normes d'emploi.

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

*First reading agreed to.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** The member for a short statement?

**Ms. Cheri DiNovo:** This bill would raise the minimum wage above the poverty line, unlike the government's moves. Therefore, it would raise over a million Ontarians out of poverty by introducing a minimum wage of \$10.25 immediately.

1350

## STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

### FIRST NATIONS TECHNICAL INSTITUTE

**Hon. John Milloy:** Today, along with my colleagues the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Minister Dombrowsky, the Minister of Agriculture, I had the opportunity to visit a very special place of learning in Ontario. The First Nations Technical Institute is the longest-standing aboriginal post-secondary institute in our province.

For 22 years it has provided aboriginal students with the training and skills they need to succeed through college, university and community programs. It has also welcomed them into a strong, caring community that offers a holistic approach to learning opportunities for aboriginal people. That's why it was so troubling to learn from Minister Dombrowsky, in her role as the local MPP, that because of federal cuts the institute was in danger of closing its doors.

Our government wanted to make sure that didn't happen. Together with Minister Dombrowsky, we worked with the institute to forge a new partnership. This year we'll make a one-time \$1.5-million investment in the school and, working together, we're going to develop a financial plan to make sure the institute can succeed in the years ahead.

I'm proud of the work our government has done with the First Nations Technical Institute and the work we've done on aboriginal education generally. In 2007-08, our government invested \$24 million in aboriginal post-secondary education and training. Of that amount, \$1 million went to the institute's programs, including the school's highly regarded aviation program; an additional \$671,000 funded other institute programs. This is all part of our commitment to making sure that aboriginal students in Ontario can reach their full potential.

But we are missing an important partner in the federal government. From 1985 to 2007, the federal government funded the First Nations Technical Institute. Recently, they made a decision to cut funding to aboriginal post-secondary education. I've written to my federal counterpart and asked him to join me in helping to find a secure, long-term answer to the post-secondary challenges faced by our aboriginal partners.

We're going to continue to work with our education partners in the year ahead to make sure aboriginal students get the support they need to succeed. And I'm going to continue to ask the federal government to come to the table and work with us.

I want to again thank my colleague the member for Prince Edward-Hastings for her hard work on behalf of the institute. It's because of her advocacy that the people of Ontario recognize the importance of the institute and the critical role it plays in the community.

In closing, I'd like to bring to this Legislature the greetings and appreciation of Chief R. Donald Maracle, Chief of the Mohawks of the Bay of Quinte, who was at the announcement this morning and wanted me to pass them on to this Legislature and to our government.

### FIRST NATIONS TECHNICAL INSTITUTE

**Hon. Michael Bryant:** It is with great pleasure that I rise today to echo the comments of the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities, along with the great member for Prince Edward-Hastings. It was a truly special morning to meet with students and facility members of the great First Nations Technical Institute of the Tyendinaga Mohawk Territory. We were all inspired by the passion of the faculty to teach, by the desire of the students to learn and by the drive and leadership of their president, Tim Thompson.

With today's announcement of increased support, the McGuinty government is doing its part to ensure that the success of the First Nations Technical Institute is secured and continues to grow now and in the future. Our focus is training, education and, most of all, jobs. Jobs increase respect and choices for First Nations, Metis and Inuit people, and respect preserves dignity. Increasing and preserving that for First Nations in Ontario, Metis in Ontario and Inuit in this province is a main focus of this government.



The First Nations Technical Institute is the launch pad for more jobs and a stronger economy and, most of all, a brighter future for Ontario First Nations.

I congratulate the president of FNTI, Tim Thompson, and all of the faculty, staff and students at the institute for its many academic and community accomplishments; so, too, to Chief Maracle and council and to that community. I look forward to many more years of success for this institute and its students.

## GOVERNMENT INVESTMENTS

**Hon. Sandra Pupatello:** I rise in the Legislature today to speak about how our government is partnering with industry to create jobs and opportunity for Ontario families. Recently, we announced two examples of this strategy in action: our most recent investment with Ford, and the Next Generation of Jobs Fund.

It was a very, very proud day when we had Premier McGuinty in Windsor to announce this partnership with Ford Motor Co.

Yesterday I joined the Premier, Minister of Finance Dwight Duncan, our own MPP Bruce Crozier, and Ford executives at the Essex engine plant in Windsor to announce a \$170-million investment by Ford to retool this facility and put roughly 300 previously laid-off people back on the job.

We believe there's a strong possibility that the number of jobs returning to the Essex engine plant will increase with the implementation of further phases and with additional and constructive dialogue between both levels of government and Ford Motor Co. We are committed to working with Ford and the federal government—and let me say that clearly—to bring even more investment to this facility. The Ontario government has made commitments under the Ontario automotive investment strategy allowing us to fund up to 10% of total program costs, and in this case, \$17 million. This strategic investment represents a big win for the workers of the Essex engine plant, for Windsor and for Ontario's automotive sector.

On March 4, the McGuinty government announced its \$1.15-billion Next Generation of Jobs Fund to deliver good jobs for Ontario families by making Ontario the best place to develop and make products for tomorrow. NextGen is a different type of fund for a different type of economy; at \$1.15 billion, we're putting major resources behind this. The fund targets areas where Ontario has the greatest potential: green auto research, parts production and vehicle assembly; clean fuels, clean industries and environmental technologies; health technologies and pharmaceutical research and manufacturing; and digital media and information and communications technology.

NextGen will position Ontario to win leading-edge global investments, it will make Ontario a centre of excellence for innovation and commercialization, and it will place Ontario ahead of the curve in green technologies, making products that reduce greenhouse gases, help our environment and make Ontario more competitive.

We know that opportunity doesn't hang around, and that's why companies submitting a completed proposal for their project will get a decision in 45 days. Our service guarantee is a first for the Ontario government business program and means that a managing director of an Ontario subsidiary can phone the global CEO of their company and say, "If you want this project done quickly, choose Ontario."

Ontario has the highest percentage of people with a post-secondary education in the world. We're building on this advantage through our investments in education and training. NextGen is the next stage, creating the rewarding high-value jobs that will live up to our talented and skilled workforce. This is how we will make Ontario a leader in the knowledge economy.

Today's economy is too complicated and too competitive for governments to simply cut taxes and hope for the best. Of course, creating a competitive business environment is at the core of any prudent economic plan. That's why our budget proposed new tax relief today totalling \$750 million over four years. That's on top of the further \$1.1 billion over three years in targeted, strategic tax reductions proposed in the 2007 fall economic update.

But governments need to do more. They need to show leadership and vision. They need to be at the table, partnering with industry to create jobs and win investment. Make no mistake: If Ontario doesn't step up, somebody else will.

### 1400

We know what we can accomplish when the government and business work together. By coming forward with our \$500-million automotive investment strategy, we managed to leverage that into \$7 billion of new investments, safeguarding thousands of jobs—and this during very tough times for our car companies.

Yesterday's announcement with Ford is just the latest in a series of success stories from our government's partnerships with industry, and these accomplishments will continue with the Next Generation of Jobs Fund. We are sending a message to companies around the world: If you've got a project that will grow your business and create jobs, Ontario wants to partner with you to make it happen.

We will continue to do this as our part of our government's five-point economic plan: partnering with industry, investing in skills and education, rebuilding infrastructure, boosting innovation and cutting business costs.

I'm proud to be part of a government that is prepared to step up to the plate and be part of the solution. That's what Ontarians expect and deserve, and that's what Ontarians will continue to get from this side of the House.

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Responses?

## GOVERNMENT INVESTMENTS

**Mr. Ted Chudleigh:** My friend from Durham, who shares a bench with me and spent 30 years in the auto-



motive industry, says this plan is wrong-headed. Wrong-headed—it's headed in the wrong direction. It is a classic example of anti-free trade policy. This plan is government-driven; it's not industry-driven. It is a plan that would feel comfortable in the 1960s and 1970s, when the government used to guide industry in these ways, until we found out that government had an unholy ability to judge industries that were about to fail and pour Ontario taxpayers' money into industries that were not doing well.

The other thing this plan does is benefit Ford, which is fine in Windsor and fine in Oakville, it's a wonderful thing, but it injects itself into the free market. It hasn't put any money into Chrysler. It hasn't put any money into General Motors. It makes it uncompetitive in those other industries when government supports only one industry in a town like this.

This industry is suffering from high taxes and the high cost of doing business in Ontario. If you reduced the taxes of the industry, if you made Ontario a more competitive playing field in North America, instead of having the highest taxes in North America, the highest taxes in Canada, if you made it—

**Hon. Sandra Pupatello:** Nonsense, nonsense.

**Mr. Ted Chudleigh:** I'm sorry, Speaker. She had her time and apparently she wants my time too. That would make her a Liberal.

If you levelled the playing field for all businesses, then all businesses would succeed, instead of looking for some other place to do business. I read a very nice poem about that in the Legislature last week; I would recommend it to you. It's in Hansard.

*Interjection.*

**Mr. Ted Chudleigh:** Apparently the member from St. Catharines also wants some of my time.

The \$1.5 billion would be better spent creating a business-friendly atmosphere for all Ontario businesses, one that would level the playing field and let everyone participate in it. After all, 82% of Ontario employment is in small and medium-sized businesses. Those businesses are not going to benefit one iota from these kinds of expenditures. Those are the businesses that are going bankrupt and leaving this province for lower-cost jurisdictions, and those are the businesses that employ, as I said, 82% of Ontarians, and you're doing nothing for those businesses. It doesn't apply to small businesses and they are the ones suffering.

You put \$17 million into Windsor—\$17 million, \$57,000 per job. But how much did you put into Kitchener? How about Kitchener, where there were 2,934 jobs gone missing? Where is \$17 million for Kitchener? They should get the same thing in Kitchener. What about Hamilton? Hamilton has lost 1,840 jobs. Whereabouts is the \$10,000,488 for Hamilton? Whereabouts is Guelph's money? Guelph lost a tremendous number of jobs, as did Collingwood, as did Cambridge, Thunder Bay, Smiths Falls. Whereabouts is their money? No, they don't have two cabinet ministers in their towns.

This is patronage, that's what this is: a bunch of patronage to make you look good in your towns, using Ontario taxpayers' dollars to do it.

You shouldn't be proud of this. You should be ashamed.

## FIRST NATIONS TECHNICAL INSTITUTE

**Mr. Norm Miller:** In the short minute I have left, I'll comment on the statement by the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs. As usual, the provincial government initially just argued that the problem belonged to the federal government in terms of the First Nations Technical Institute. We all recognize that education and training opportunities are of paramount importance if we are going to see improvement in the conditions in our aboriginal communities.

This government has a new aboriginal policy framework. Let me explain what that means. That means the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs, when he deals with the situation in Caledonia, shows up there—he doesn't actually talk to anybody. He just shows up in Caledonia. He goes around and films himself and posts it on YouTube. That's the new aboriginal policy framework in action. He doesn't have to talk to people.

From where I'm standing, this government really needs to roll up its sleeves and has a lot more work to do. Look at Kashechewan, where they're waiting for a new school to serve a community that hasn't produced a high school graduate on its own soil for more than two years. And read the Lieutenant Governor's recent speech that he made in Sudbury, if you want to see all the work that needs to be done on the aboriginal file.

## FIRST NATIONS TECHNICAL INSTITUTE

**Mr. Gilles Bisson:** Well, here we go again, the Liberal government engaging themselves in their favourite pursuit, and that is to blame the federal government every time something happens and to try to put everything on their doorstep. I would remind the government that the province of Ontario, for every citizen in the province, is responsible for education both at the post-secondary level and at the primary and secondary levels. Why should First Nations people be treated any different?

Today, the government announced they're going to put forward \$1.5 million to the First Nations Technical Institute, an institute that is in place that allows First Nations people to get the skills that they need to bring back to the communities to build a capacity that is so necessary to run their institutions and run government in their own communities.

What does the government do? The federal government has cut the funding by over \$2 million. The provincial government should have come in and basically said, "We are going to make sure that people who want to get an education at the post-secondary level are able to get it." What do they do? It's a half measure. They bring



forward \$1.5 million. Why? Because this provincial government is no different than the federal government. The policy is, you underfund it and you make it fail. That's what this government is up to.

I am upset with this government on behalf of the communities that we represent. My colleague Michael Prue on the finance committee brought a motion before the finance committee that was clear. That motion proposed that we bring forward the necessary funding to make sure that FNTI gets the dollars that are necessary so that they can survive beyond the spring, they can survive beyond next fall, so they can flourish and become the organization they need to be so communities can build capacity.

This is no different than what the federal government always does: Underfund it, let it fail and let's see what happens.

### GOVERNMENT INVESTMENTS

**Mr. Paul Miller:** I'd like to address the engine plant. I want to be clear that the NDP supports direct investment in companies if there is a clear link between the investment and the creation of good, paying jobs. I notice that no date has been given for the reopening of this plant. I await the release of funding details. However, if this investment results in the creation of 300 good, quality jobs for workers who would otherwise be out of work, then this investment is worth making. But it doesn't go far enough; 40% of the people in that area are out of work. Three hundred jobs? Not enough.

That said, it is our belief that the McGuinty record has been completely inadequate, and there is no excuse for the loss of 200,000 jobs. We in the NDP have been clear that the job crisis in the manufacturing and resource sectors is the number one challenge of this House. Since Dalton McGuinty came to power, we've lost 18% of our high-paying manufacturing jobs. That is \$6.6 billion in wages out of the Ontario economy.

That very scary number of 18% sounds good compared to the absolute devastation of the manufacturing sectors that communities such as Hamilton have endured, where 30% of the manufacturing jobs have been lost—a disgrace. But all this pales in comparison to the hit that Windsor—the minister's home riding—has taken, where close to 40% of the manufacturing jobs have disappeared, and which now has the second-highest unemployment rate in Canada.

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Recently, the NDP have proposed two ideas that won wide support from business, labour and economists: a manufacturing investment tax credit and an aggressive Buy Ontario program for all transit vehicles—which our member brought forward and which was shot down. These ideas were rejected by the McGuinty government.

The credit would be 10% of the investments in new machinery, buildings and equipment. An added incentive of 20% credit would be available for investments in green industry jobs. This is an idea that has been widely endorsed by economists and has been implemented with

impressive results, I might add, in Manitoba and Saskatchewan, and now Quebec is on board. What's wrong with Ontario? Why haven't we joined in?

The federal government also provides just this sort of credit in the Maritime provinces as well. And in its budget two weeks ago, Quebec became the third province to endorse the idea and will offer a provincial credit shortly. Apparently Mr. Ramsay, in his interim report on manufacturing, also endorses the concept. It's right there on page 28 of the budget.

Unfortunately, rather than simply introducing a provincial manufacturing credit in its budget, the government has reverted to its unfortunate habit of pointing fingers at Ottawa, and merely recommends that the federal government offer a credit for Ontario now.

### ADJOURNMENT DEBATE

**Mr. Bill Murdoch:** On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I seek unanimous consent to withdraw my request filed yesterday for a late show addressed to the Minister of Public Infrastructure and Renewal.

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** The member seeks unanimous consent. Agreed? I heard a "no."

All those in favour will say "aye."

All those opposed will say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

*Agreed to.*

### VISITORS

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** I want to ask the table—I was just a little confused. I looked at the calendar today and it had a number of different dates: It's July, it's January, it's April; all say the first, though.

On behalf of the member from Mississauga—Streetsville and the member from Erindale, we'd like to welcome Heather Sinclair and her students from John Fraser Secondary School in Mississauga, who are visiting in the west visitors' gallery. Welcome today.

On behalf of the member from London—Fanshawe, we'd like to welcome the grade 12 political science class from Clarke Road Secondary School in London today in the east gallery. Welcome to Queen's Park.

On behalf of the member from Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock, we'd like to welcome Mr. Azm Hoque, the father of her legislative intern. Mr. Hoque is a former senior United Nations officer in Asia and Africa, and he's in the east members' gallery. Welcome today, sir.

On behalf of the member from Parkdale—High Park, we'd like to welcome her guests: Fahma Ali, Joan Taylor, Michael Taylor and Crystal Taylor in the east gallery. Welcome.

On behalf of the members from Kitchener Centre and Richmond Hill and all members in the House, we want to acknowledge the student representatives from the Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance and the college student association, who are here for their annual Queen's Park conference. Welcome to Queen's Park today.



On behalf of the members from Hamilton Centre and Timmins-James Bay, we would like to welcome, in the east members' gallery, Willamina McGrimmond, Nancy Coaster, Max Havin, Allison McReady and George Sorger. Welcome to Queen's Park today.

#### MEMBERS' HOCKEY GAME

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** As Speaker, I would like to recognize those members who played last night for the Ontario Legiskaters—it's a hockey team—in a tune-up hockey game against the legislative staff and security. I want to thank them, and I will be naming the members by name: Jean-Marc Lalonde, the coach; Bob Delaney; Norm Miller; George Smitherman; John O'Toole; and Paul Miller. The staff won the game, 9-6. We want to congratulate both Norm Miller and Paul Miller for each scoring two goals last night as well.

To everyone who has not been recognized, welcome to Queen's Park today.

#### ORAL QUESTIONS

##### TIRE DISPOSAL

**Mr. Robert W. Runciman:** My question is for the Premier. I'm going to ask him if he can remember a promise and commitment. In 2005, you very adamantly said to members of the media, and I'm quoting from the Toronto Star: "There'll be no tire tax." Got it?

I know the Premier has a hazy memory when it comes to many of his promises, and this may be a case in point because, Premier, you've now indicated you will be bringing in a tire tax. You made the announcement effectively under the cover of darkness when the Legislature wasn't sitting, three days after the budget was tabled.

Premier, will you stand up today and admit that this is a new tax on hard-working Ontarians and that you have once again broken a promise?

**Hon. Dalton McGuinty:** There's an important issue before us as a province. The fact of the matter is, we are the only province in Canada that does not have a formal tire recycling plan in place.

We are stockpiling them by the millions. They are wonderful breeding grounds for mosquitoes during the season, including the danger of West Nile virus. They tell me it takes about 100 years for a tire to begin to decompose, and we all understand the dangers associated with fires and tires.

I think the time has come for us to act responsibly and to put in place a formal tire recycling plan.

**Mr. Robert W. Runciman:** I didn't hear anything in reference to the promise that the Premier made in 2005. Perhaps he could have stood up and said it was an ill-thought-out slip of the tongue. No; he just declined to even comment on it.

This is the proposal that was talked about last Friday. It's the same proposal that was put forward in 2005. That's when the Premier responded with the words that I used earlier. We're talking about a \$60-million tab that hard-working Ontarians are going to have to pick up.

Once again, a broken promise, trying to slip it by Ontarians. I will ask the Premier, once again: Will you stand up today, admit this is a new tax on hard-working Ontarians and that you have once again broken a promise?

**Hon. Dalton McGuinty:** Is the leader of the official opposition suggesting that we should not put in place a formal tire recycling plan in the province of Ontario? If that is his position, then obviously I take issue with that and he should just admit to that.

I think the responsible thing for us to do, given the information that we have, the knowledge at hand, our understanding of the damage that tires are causing to our natural environment—it's time for us to do something.

Is there going to be a cost associated with this? Yes, there's going to be a cost associated with it. It would be nice to pretend that there was no such cost going to be associated with it, but I think it's important for us to get on with this, to put in place a formal tire recycling plan and to assume our full responsibility as knowledgeable global citizens at the beginning of the 21st century.

We know the damage that tires are causing to our environment. It's time for us to own up to that and to do something about it.

**Mr. Robert W. Runciman:** The Premier talks about "admitting." Why doesn't he admit that he has once again flip-flopped after an election on a very significant promise to Ontarians?

I want to read, for the Premier's benefit, the definition of the word "tax" as it appears in Webster's dictionary. Your minister declined to describe this as a tax: "Exact a contribution to the cost of government. A charge imposed. A burden."

Your proposed tire tax clearly fits that definition. You felt that way in 2005 when you described it as a tax. Premier, why was this \$60-million tax grab not included in your budget? Why did you try to sneak it by hard-working Ontarians?

**Hon. Dalton McGuinty:** A few facts. Those are always of some modest benefit in this Legislature, I've always thought.

First of all, there is no proposal that we have yet received from Waste Diversion Ontario. We will be seeking a proposal from them.

Secondly, what we will do, if we receive a proposal that we think is workable, is put in place a program. There will be a cost associated with this. All of the costs—any monies received from Ontarians—will be exclusively devoted to the tire recycling plan.

In terms of the amount of that fee, somewhere between \$3 and \$6 per tire has been suggested in the past. We want to ensure that we are getting all the money we need, and no more money than we need, to have a formal tire recycling plan in place. We know the danger that tires in stockpiles present to our natural environment and

to our health. We think it's time for us to do something about that. We think it's time to move on with this, and we will.

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### TIRE DISPOSAL

**Mr. Robert W. Runciman:** To the Premier: Again, this sounds like an old, Bob Nixon, "This is not a tax grab," speech.

I want to go back to the Premier and his government's attempts to lowball a tax increase, to minimize public awareness of a new tax, and yet another McGuinty broken promise. This is really a tax hike by stealth, a calculated effort, I believe, to reduce public awareness, and again, a breach of parliamentary tradition. I'm giving you notice, Mr. Speaker, that tomorrow I will be filing a question of privilege with you on this issue.

Will the Premier please explain to Ontarians and to members of this House why this \$60-million cost to Ontarians was not even referenced in his budget?

**Hon. Dalton McGuinty:** First of all, it's a proposal, which we have even yet to receive from Waste Diversion Ontario. We are doing this in a very public way, and I invite Ontarians to reflect on this issue. What do they think we should do with our used tires? Do they think we should continue to stockpile those? Do they think we should allow a danger to present itself? We had a fire in this province in the past, when it came to tires, and it took us a long time to put that fire out. There were tremendous toxic emissions that emanated from that fire. We're aware of the dangers constituted by stockpiling tires indefinitely. We think it's time for us to do something about that. We think that's in keeping with the values of Ontarians, and we want to give expression to that through our new plan.

**Mr. Robert W. Runciman:** The Premier is asking us to reflect, and I would ask him to reflect on his promises. We had many promises broken in the last mandate after an election, especially on taxes, that have impacted Ontarians in a very negative way. I think many could argue that we, in this place, live something of a sheltered existence. Perhaps we're not aware of the many challenges that Ontarians are facing. We know we're going into an economic slowdown—the Minister of Finance has acknowledged that—perhaps even into a recession. People are facing higher energy costs, higher grocery costs and electricity prices, and outstanding mortgages. Personal bankruptcies set a record last year. These are real challenges facing real people outside the Queen's Park precinct. How can you have the nerve, the gall, to break yet another promise and put another burden on the backs of hard-working Ontarians?

**Hon. Dalton McGuinty:** It's been said that the responsibility of leadership is to represent the future to the present.

*Interjection.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Member from Oxford, would you please withdraw the comment you just made.

**Mr. Ernie Hardeman:** Withdrawn.

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Thank you. Premier?

**Hon. Dalton McGuinty:** I see a bright and promising future for Ontarians as we, among other things, assume our responsibility as global citizens. In fact, I'm convinced that we can create jobs, when it comes to recycling tires in the province of Ontario. I'm convinced that, with the benefit of our \$1.15-billion Next Generation of Jobs Fund, we can find new opportunities as we take responsibility for being more responsible in the face of the environment and our understanding of the damage we're causing to it. It's not all doom and gloom. I think there's a way we can actually benefit the economy. We can grow this economy and create good, new, green jobs at the same time that we reduce toxic emissions into our environment. I think that's what Ontarians want us to pursue.

**Mr. Robert W. Runciman:** This is no April Fool's joke on Ontarians. A tax is a tax when the Liberals want to call it a tax. Regrettably, this is what's happening in this situation: You're once again breaking your promise in the aftermath of a provincial election. You've got no scapegoat to blame this time, but only semantics and the hope that Ontarians will not notice or not care—cynicism, I would suggest, at its finest.

I would ask the Premier, based on their actions here, their actions in the past and more specifically, yet again breaking another unequivocal promise to the people of Ontario, how does he define "honesty and integrity"?

**Hon. Dalton McGuinty:** The honourable member mentioned that he hoped Ontarians notice and care, and I hope the same thing. I hope they notice what's happening with respect to stockpiling our used tires, and I hope they care about that. And I hope they will take the opportunity to reflect and to understand.

Given that we are certainly the most privileged generation in our history, in terms of being armed with information about the impact our activities are having on our natural environment, it's a sad reality that one in three Ontarians is now being diagnosed with cancer and one in four Ontarians is dying of cancer. We are having an impact on the quality of our environment, and it's affecting our health.

I know that what I'm asking families to do is not easy. This will impose additional costs on them. But at the same time, if we get this right, we can keep that cost minimal, we can keep it affordable, we can assume our responsibility as privileged global citizens and we can create new, green jobs. I think our times demand of us that we take on this challenge, that we grapple with it and that we get it right. We'll have a good conversation with Ontarians, but we will move forward.



## MANUFACTURING JOBS

**Mr. Howard Hampton:** I have a question of the Premier. This morning, we learned that another 124 working families in Kitchener are losing their pay-cheques because Gencor Foods has closed its doors. It's the latest in a lengthy list of plant closures, factory closures and loss of manufacturing jobs in the Kitchener-Cambridge area.

My question is: Will the McGuinty government admit that, even after your much-ballyhooed budget of last week, manufacturing jobs continue to be lost in Ontario at an alarming rate?

**Hon. Dalton McGuinty:** First of all, our hearts go out to anybody who finds himself in a difficult position at this point in our history when they're losing a job. We understand that's really tough on the individuals and especially hard on their families. If I had a magic wand—perhaps the leader of the NDP has possession of such an instrument—that could ensure that we lost no more jobs at any time, I would gladly wave it and we wouldn't have to worry about that anymore. But I don't.

So what we've done is the best job we can in the circumstances. The fact is, we have cut taxes in a way that benefits manufacturers who find themselves in distress, and we have launched an unprecedented program, investing in new skills and education for our workers so they can get better jobs. We are eager to continue to work with the manufacturing sector. But we think investing in infrastructure creates jobs in the short term, investing in the skills and education of our workers improves their chances of getting a better job in the near future, and we also continue to believe that the tax cuts we made will stand our manufacturers in good stead.

**Mr. Howard Hampton:** The fact is, the budget didn't have a jobs plan, and that's part of the problem. I've outlined what other provinces are doing in terms of a jobs plan: bringing in buy-domestic policies that are greater than 25% content; bringing in a refundable manufacturing investment tax credit—things that are working in Manitoba and Saskatchewan, and in the province of Quebec.

But it's not just in Kitchener. The closure of the CanGro food processing facility in Niagara will throw 250 workers out of their livelihood, not to mention 150 fruit growers. How many numbers do there have to be—how many factories have to close, and how many workers have to lose their jobs in Ontario—before the McGuinty government actually comes forward with a jobs plan?

**Hon. Dalton McGuinty:** I know the leader of the NDP understands the consequences, on the ground here in Ontario, of the high dollar; he understands the impact of the high cost of oil; he understands the impact of a struggling US economy; and he understands the impact that the struggling US economy is having by way of reverberations on emerging economies. He understands all of that, and what it means to the people of Ontario.

But what he doesn't understand is the wisdom of the approach we are taking. It is thoughtful, it is progressive, it is compassionate and it's in keeping with the aspirations and values of the people of Ontario. That is why we are cutting business taxes in an effective way. That is why we will continue to invest in infrastructure.

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We've got a 10-year, \$60-billion plan that's creating all kinds of jobs immediately, when we need them, and enhancing our productivity in the long term. We are investing heavily in innovation, helping Ontarians turn those great ideas that they have into products and services for sale to the world. And, just as the Minister of Economic Development and Trade announced a few moments ago, we had a great day yesterday in Windsor, partnering with Ford yet again to create still more jobs.

**Mr. Howard Hampton:** The Premier might want to know that two thirds of the people who used to work in that plant are still out of a job; they're no longer working.

But the fact of the matter is this: Other provinces also face challenges, but they've brought in measures. Quebec adopted a manufacturing investment tax credit; Manitoba adopted a manufacturing investment tax credit, made it refundable and, in making it refundable, has helped to sustain manufacturing jobs there. Other jurisdictions have a buy-domestic policy, which creates and sustains manufacturing jobs in their jurisdiction. What do we see in Ontario? None of these measures.

So I ask the Premier again: How many tens of thousands of hard-working Ontario families have to lose their jobs before the McGuinty government actually comes forward with a jobs plan to do something about the problem?

**Hon. Dalton McGuinty:** I know the leader of the NDP champions this refundable tax credit approach. It has some merits and we have given it some thought, but we're doing something that's even better. In this budget, we are refunding capital taxes for our manufacturers and resource sector to the tune of \$190 million. As soon as the budget is passed, we want to get these cheques out the door. That's immediate. Beyond that, we have in place a new buy-Canada policy. It's not 25%; 82% of all the money that we're putting into public transit, for example, is going into the Ontario economy to create Ontario jobs.

We have carefully considered just how far we can go in that regard. We're proud of these initiatives. There's always more to be done. We look forward to more suggestions from the leader of the NDP. But I think it is simply inaccurate for him to suggest that we don't have the kind of plan in place that Ontario businesses and Ontario families have been looking for.

NATIONAL CHILD BENEFIT  
SUPPLEMENT

**Mr. Howard Hampton:** To the Premier: I think the only plan that people see out of the McGuinty government is more unemployment.



I want to ask the Premier about the Minister of Children and Youth Services, who yesterday tried to tell Ontarians that the clawback of the national child benefit supplement will end this July. The fact of the matter is, the national child benefit supplement provides about \$100 per month to the lowest-income children. When you do the math, in July your government will only allow those children to keep about \$50 of that \$100, which means you'll still be taking \$50 a month away from those lowest-income kids.

My question to the Premier is this: Since you're still going to be taking \$50 a month from the lowest-income kids, how is that not a clawback?

**Hon. Dalton McGuinty:** To the Minister of Children and Youth Services.

**Hon. Deborah Matthews:** I'm delighted to have the opportunity again to explain what the Ontario child benefit will do for low-income Ontarians. Starting this July, parents in low-income families will receive up to \$50 per child, per month. That is in addition to the full NCBS, and those on social assistance will receive their social assistance cheque. There will not be a clawback of the NCBS.

As I explained yesterday, the beauty of the Ontario child benefit is that it speaks to the aspirations of people on social assistance who look to moving on, who look to entering the workforce. They will be able to take the full Ontario child benefit with them when they leave social assistance for employment.

**Mr. Howard Hampton:** I think we've seen another exercise in McGuinty government doublespeak. The lowest-income kids are supposed to receive \$100 a month from the federal government to help them escape poverty. Instead, the McGuinty government is going to swim them through mounds of paperwork, and at the end of the mounds of paperwork those lowest-income kids are only going to get \$50 a month—and the McGuinty government is going to say, "You're better off."

Tell me, Minister, when is a low-income child, struggling in poverty, better off after you've taken \$50 a month off their kitchen table?

**Hon. Deborah Matthews:** This question gives me an opportunity to say that we are spending another \$150 million this year on the Ontario child benefit. This is part of a very large investment and commitment.

The member opposite has asked about the application process. It's a good reminder. Parents must fill in their income tax, they must file their income taxes, to be eligible for the Ontario child benefit. It's a good reminder for parents to file their income taxes, to check off the appropriate box for the NCBS, and they will automatically receive the Ontario child benefit.

**Mr. Howard Hampton:** More words to try to make it seem as if the McGuinty government isn't taking \$50 a month from the lowest-income kids. But it doesn't end there. The McGuinty government is also going to take away the back-to-school clothing benefit and the winter clothing benefit from those lowest-income kids. I don't know about members of the McGuinty government, but

we had lots of days this winter of 20 below zero, 30 below zero. Can you tell me how those lowest-income kids are going to have winter clothing when you're taking \$50 a month away from them off the top and then you're going to take their winter clothing allowance away from them as well?

**Hon. Deborah Matthews:** The Ontario child benefit goes way beyond simply ending the clawback. It goes way beyond the winter coat and back to school. This is a benefit that goes to all low-income families, regardless of the source of income; people on social assistance receive it and the working poor receive it. This is a very important policy shift for Ontario. It's an important component of our poverty-reduction platform.

I would ask that members opposite stand up and support the Ontario child benefit. It's an important benefit, and I do not understand their opposition to this very important piece of legislation.

## GOVERNMENT SPENDING

**Mr. Tim Hudak:** The question is to the Premier. Premier, members don't often get to use the word "gargantuan" in the Ontario Legislature, but the growth of government workers making more than \$100,000 per year under the McGuinty government has been nothing short of gargantuan. Your tax-and-spending policies have brought Ontario to the brink of recession. At a time when some 200,000 families have lost jobs in the manufacturing sector, including CanGro in Niagara, they see an extraordinary bloat, not in front-line workers, but in high-priced spin doctors making more than \$100,000 per year.

Premier, what direction have you given your ministries to control this excessive growth in those making more than \$100,000 per year?

**Hon. Dalton McGuinty:** To the Minister of Finance.

**Hon. Dwight Duncan:** To respond to the question, this government has managed the affairs of the province prudently. That's why we've balanced our budget for the last three years. That's why we're paying down debt.

Unlike the member opposite, we don't want to dump on teachers, we don't want to make fun of public servants, we don't want to criticize our nurses, and we don't want to criticize public servants within the Ontario public service. Just last year, we found a billion dollars in savings with the help of those very public servants.

We believe in investing in health care. We believe in investing in public education. We have a balanced approach to the challenges that face our economy today. We look to our partners, our partners in the public service, our partners in the broader public service, to deliver, in an efficient way, the goods and services that the people of Ontario have come to expect.

**Mr. Tim Hudak:** I say to the minister, I don't know what circles he travels in, but I don't see many teachers, nurses or personal support care workers from long-term-care homes making \$100,000 per year. In fact, you're completely distorting what is on this list.



Let me put this in perspective. At this time, when Ontario's private sector job growth is dead last in all of Canada, you have added some 200,000 positions to government payrolls—approximately the size of the city of Kitchener.

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When it comes to the \$100,000-plus club, some 42,000—approximately the size of the city of the Welland—have been added of government workers making more than \$100,000 a year. By way of example, the Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corp. has added some 92 more people to the \$100,000 club.

At a time when front-line workers are being laid off and revenue has gone down, what direction has this minister given to crown agencies to control this runaway spending?

**Hon. Dwight Duncan:** In fact, there were 875 nurses on that list yesterday, and there are doctors on that list and there are others who are delivering important front-line services.

I should also remind the member that with the 1996 threshold, if you apply the simple consumer price index between then and now, we would have reduced the list by two thirds. So in fact, we've seen average salaries on the list over \$100,000 increase by 1%. This government has managed its resources in a prudent and appropriate fashion. It is investing in education; it is investing in public health care. It is balancing the budget—something that member knows very little about. It is paying down debt and continuing to provide the public with the services they've come to expect by a very high-quality, high-calibre Ontario public service.

#### MINIMUM WAGE

**Ms. Cheri DiNovo:** My question is for the Premier. It's on behalf of Fauma and Joan and women like them who've lived in shelters and struggled to survive on minimum wage. My question is a simple one. It's this: Why won't the government raise the minimum wage to the poverty line?

**Hon. Dalton McGuinty:** We're proud to announce that the minimum wage just went up, effective midnight last night. It went up 9.3% overnight, in fact. It's up to \$8.75 an hour today. We started at \$6.85; before we formed the government, it was frozen for nine straight years. I think this is the fifth consecutive increase we've put in place. We hear regularly from the NDP that it's not enough; we hear regularly from the Conservatives that it's too much. We think we've got it just right.

**Ms. Cheri DiNovo:** Actually, it's less than the poor were making in 1973 in real dollars. You can't survive on \$8.75. My question to the Premier is this one: Why won't this government raise the minimum wage to the poverty line? It's disgusting.

**Hon. Dalton McGuinty:** I think it's important for us to look at the minimum wage as an important issue for our working poor, but we also have to look beyond that. That's why we're proud of the fact that in this budget, for

the first time, we're putting in place a new Ontario dental program for children in low-income families. We're proud of our Ontario child benefit. We're proud of the investments that we've made in newborn screening, free vaccines for children, our school-based nutrition program, and the investments we're making in improving affordable housing in the province. All of those are dimensions to the quality of life for people who are growing up in Ontario in poverty.

I welcome the member's attention that she devotes to the minimum wage, but I'd ask her to look beyond that and to recognize some of the other efforts we're making in improving the quality of life for the poor in Ontario.

#### YOUTH EMPLOYMENT

**Mr. Bas Balkissoon:** My question is for the Minister of Children and Youth Services. In my riding of Scarborough—Rouge River, as in other areas of Toronto and across the province, some youth face a lack of opportunity to become engaged in their community and find employment that offers them a future. Because of this, I was pleased to hear today about our government's initiative to provide over 800 youth in high-needs Toronto neighbourhoods with summer job opportunities.

Could the minister please elaborate on this program and explain how it will help strengthen communities such as mine and help young people achieve their full potential?

**Hon. Deborah Matthews:** I'm very pleased to have this opportunity to talk about some of our investments in young people in this province. I'd like to start by commending the member for Scarborough—Rouge River for his tireless advocacy for youth in his community.

Yes, today I announced, with Toronto Police Chief Bill Blair, the continued investments in the youth opportunity strategy. It will see 850 youth in Toronto—2000 province-wide—gain valuable work experience this summer. One hundred of those job opportunities are with the Toronto Police Service. These opportunities build strong relationships between communities, the youth taking part in the program and police services. I welcome this opportunity to talk about it and look forward to the supplementary.

**Mr. Bas Balkissoon:** I'm proud that we're reaching out to these youth to provide them with opportunities. While I think this program will go a long way, it's important to recognize that youth face challenges for many different reasons, and thus the solution isn't always the same.

Could the minister please outline what our government is doing to get at the root causes of why some youth are not able to achieve their potential and how we will move forward to tackle this difficult issue?

**Hon. Deborah Matthews:** You're right: It is a difficult issue. As a first step, we've now got 35 youth outreach workers in Toronto—62 across the province—advocating for young people, helping them get involved



in programs and services that exist, and promoting engagement in their communities.

We know it's important to get to the root causes. We have to understand why some youth are unengaged and turning to violence or gangs. That's why the Premier has appointed Alvin Curling and Roy McMurtry to conduct a review of the roots of violence, to identify those root causes, and to provide recommendations to this government on how to continue building safer and stronger communities and schools. We look forward to receiving their review.

Finally, we know that poverty leads to wasted potential. That's why for the first time in Ontario we're developing a comprehensive poverty reduction strategy to provide more youth with the opportunity they need to achieve their full potential.

### GYPSY MOTH INFESTATION

**Mr. Toby Barrett:** To the Minister of Natural Resources: The emerald ash borer has invaded Norfolk county, Canada's forest capital with 30% forest cover, and 25% of that is ash. The gypsy moth is chewing its way through the proud oak of Haldimand county, as well as Six Nations in Norfolk. The Norfolk Woodlot Owners Association are desperate to mitigate this destruction, but they're on their own.

The mayor of Norfolk county, Canada's forest capital, has written letters and met with you to request funding. I've written to you, and I have hundreds of names on petitions requesting financial aid to deal with these infestations—but yet again, nothing.

Minister, when can Haldimand, Norfolk and other areas expect you to step up with some money to stem the devastation of emerald ash and gypsy moth?

**Hon. Donna H. Cansfield:** I'd like to remind the member that in fact spraying has not been happening in this province for some 19 years, which included the time that his government was involved.

We're more than prepared to offer the technical support, and we have done that, to the different municipalities. In fact, there are some pilot projects under way with gypsy moth, which is a new type of spray. All we're doing is actually doing the monitoring on this process, which will happen in three major areas in the province. Once we have an understanding of whether there's been some effectiveness of this particular new spray, then we'll be able to work even more closely with the municipalities as they determine what direction they wish to take with our technical support.

**Mr. Toby Barrett:** That's simply not quite good enough. You've inherited a proud ministry, the former department of lands and forests; it used to be known as the department of lands and forests. You're right, there is a precedent: Your ministry did fund the gypsy moth, up until 1992.

The BC Forest Service is actively fighting the mountain pine beetle. Your tax-and-spend government had an additional \$4.9 billion in unplanned revenue this past

year, yet you have allowed your ministry to be slashed by \$20 million. Minister, when will you redirect some of that unplanned revenue to fight both gypsy moths and emerald ash borers?

1450

**Hon. Donna H. Cansfield:** I say quite clearly that if the federal government would like to give me \$200 million, which is what they have given to the British Columbia government for the pine beetle, I would be more than happy to spray. They have not. As a matter of fact, they actually abdicate their responsibility, because once an invasive species becomes resident, they say, "Excuse me. It's not our problem anymore; it's yours." We're actually trying to change that strategy with the federal government.

Secondly, in terms of my budget, I would be more than happy to take that member through my budget so that he, in fact, does understand that it has increased, not decreased. The difference, of course, is firefighting, which is exactly what your government did and this government did and what we do: We put the money in when we need it.

### SCHOOL BOARDS

**Mr. Rosario Marchese:** My question is to the Minister of Education. Yesterday you ordered the Toronto District School Board to rearrange itself, or else. Tell us, Minister, how will the lobbing of this political hand grenade save any money or help reduce the board's deficit?

**Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne:** A year ago, Joan Green and Brian Cain went in to the Toronto District School Board and wrote a report in which they said there were issues around the size of the board and the governance. I have served on this board. For a decade, people within the board and outside of it have talked about the size of the board being a problem.

Our fundamental concern is student achievement. We want to make sure that every board in this province has the resources and is able to focus on student achievement. I've been working with the board for the last year. I met with them on January 30; I met with the governance committee on March 6. All I've done is ask for some recommendations that they might make on how to align the board so it can be the most nimble, agile system possible to focus on student achievement.

**Mr. Rosario Marchese:** Ordering the Toronto District School Board to reorganize itself will do nothing for the child being denied ESL programs, for the children on the waiting list for special education, for the parents whose children in French programs are fighting for scarce resources or for children who are in schools that are crumbling because capital dollars had to be spent to cover your deficit. Your announcement would be okay as an April Fool's joke, but you're not proposing this political hand grenade as a serious solution to our underfunding problems, are you?



**Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne:** Since we came into office, this board has received \$359 million more. This year alone, this board is getting \$26 million more—2,423 school repairs have been undertaken; 1,175 new teachers since 2003.

The issue here is that this board itself has recognized that there needs to be governance changes. They are struggling with this, and it is beyond outrageous that the member opposite hasn't spoken to people within the board, who know that if the principals can't talk to each other, if there are too many layers of bureaucracy, if the left hand doesn't know what the right hand is doing, then students suffer.

I will continue working with this board. We will put children at the centre of this circle of care, and we will make sure, in a collaborative way, that we come up with an answer that is best for the kids in Toronto.

### MINIMUM WAGE

**Mr. Bruce Crozier:** My question is for the Minister of Labour. Our government is working on behalf of vulnerable workers in Ontario, and the government is following up on its commitment to increase the minimum wage so that all Ontarians have a living wage. The recent increase marks the fifth increase to the minimum wage since we were elected in 2003. Not as much can be said for the previous government's shameful record of freezing the minimum wage for nine years. Would the minister please tell this House how this government will be increasing the minimum wage in future years?

**Hon. Brad Duguid:** I want to thank the member for Essex for the question. I also want to thank him for his consistent advocacy on behalf of vulnerable workers in his riding and across the province.

I'm proud of what this government is doing and what this government has done since 2003 to make a difference in the lives of Ontario's lower-paid and most vulnerable workers. This week, as the Premier said earlier, workers across this province are going to wake up to a minimum wage that's now 9.3% higher; we've moved it from \$8 an hour to \$8.75. That's the highest minimum wage now in this country, something that we're very, very proud of. We're doing this in an aggressive but gradual manner, making sure that we're putting money back into the pockets of low-income workers, and at the same time protecting their jobs and ensuring that businesses have time to adjust.

**Mr. Bruce Crozier:** I know that workers in my riding appreciate what this government is doing and applaud the increases to the minimum wage. Workers I've spoken to feel that the government is listening and does care about the contribution these workers make on a daily basis to our economy. I understand, however, that some people have expressed concerns about how the minimum wage is increased. I would like the Minister of Labour to tell this House how the government is dealing with these concerns.

**Hon. Brad Duguid:** I want to thank the member again for the question. He is correct: There has been a considerable amount of commentary about this particular issue. I just want to share with the Legislature some of the comments made by others on the issue.

Lindsay Boyd, chair-elect of the Windsor-Essex Regional Chamber of Commerce, said that the organization supported the gradual increase because it gives businesses time to adjust.

Len Crispino, president and CEO of the Ontario Chamber of Commerce, said that a staged approach is the fairest and most effective way to raise the minimum wage.

But most importantly of all, I read this morning in the Windsor Star a comment by a single mother working at a local Tim Hortons in Windsor. This is what she said: "Now I can afford a decent apartment."

That's what this policy is all about.

### ACCESS TO HEALTH CARE

**Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer:** My question is for the Minister of Health. Despite the widespread use of PET scans throughout the world—the United States, Australia, Europe—and certainly other provinces in Canada, there is a tremendous amount of frustration for both patients and doctors in Ontario at the lack of access to PET scans here.

In fact, Dr. Jean-Luc Urbain has said, "We know that we could save lives, avoid unnecessary surgery and optimize treatment by performing PET/CT scans on patients." He's the chief of nuclear medicine in London, and he goes on to say, "We used to say Ontario was on the cutting edge of the past. It is not even on the cutting edge of the past. Ontario right now is prehistory."

I ask you, Minister, when will you finally stand up for patients and provide access to PET scans?

**Hon. George Smitherman:** Well, it's very rich, very rich indeed, for the honourable member whose party today calls for a \$3-billion cut to health care to stand up and ask such a question, especially considering the record of treachery that was associated with their handling of the health file over those number of years. The longest-serving Minister of Health in the Harris government questions these things. I'm very proud of our cancer system in the province of Ontario and about the expansion which is ongoing.

With respect to PET scans, we have a clinical trial which is well complemented by many international experts and we have an access mechanism that is allowing Ontario patients today to access PET technology. Before we offer widespread access to PET scans, it's critically important that we know exactly those indications for which this is the most desirable form of diagnostic test to be utilized.

**Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer:** The minister knows full well that we are not going to cut health care. What a preposterous statement he continues to make. This is the same minister who is out there bullying stakeholders and



telling them to be quiet when they're not happy with the health care dollars that they receive.

I would say to you, Minister, we have Deborah Maskens, a Guelph resident and mother. Today, she has been able to use her own money—thankfully, she has money—and she has gone to the United States to get a PET scan, which her oncologist said was medically necessary to treat her ongoing kidney cancer. If you didn't have the money, you wouldn't be able to go. Here is a woman who is frustrated because she goes past a PET scanner every day at Princess Margaret when she gets treatment, but she can't use it.

1500

So I say to you today: The research has been done, the trials have been done; they're being used everywhere else in the world and in Canada. When are you finally going to—

**The Speaker:** Thank you. Minister of Health.

**Hon. George Smitherman:** The member's credibility is restricted on two points. Firstly, this issue that they don't intend to cut health care spending: No; they only intend to eliminate \$5 billion in revenue and not show anybody that there are implications. But people remember Mike Harris's commitment not to close hospitals, and they know the after-effect of that as well.

Here's a quote from Dr. Bill Evans, the chair of the Ontario PET steering committee. He's an oncologist. He's the president of Hamilton's Juravinski Cancer Centre. From the *Globe and Mail*: "There's been a criticism in Ontario in its seeming tardiness to adopt, but it's a decision taken by cancer specialists of the province, various surgeons and medical and radiation oncologists. In cancer we have to figure out how best to use it. When the clinical trials are completed, there will be a lot of people to thank us." We are not in a position to offer a technology without strict guidelines about its most appropriate use. This is the honourable member who led, as Minister of Health, an effort that saw people not even gaining access to MRIs in our province.

## ABORIGINAL RIGHTS

**Mr. Howard Hampton:** My question is for the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs. Minister, on January 17 you were given a good-faith proposal by Chief Donny Morris of Kitchenuhmaykoosib Inninuwug to help resolve the dispute between Ontario and Platinex Incorporated mining exploration company on one hand, and the First Nation on the other. It was a detailed proposal given to you on January 17. At no time have you or anyone else in the McGuinty government responded to that proposal. Why has there been a failure to respond to a good-faith proposal put forward by the chief of the KI First Nation?

**Hon. Michael Bryant:** It was the first time, as the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs, that I had been to that community on that date. I was there with Grand Chief Stan Beardy. The community was incredibly welcoming, and we had an excellent meeting where a good-faith pro-

posal was put together. Then what happened is, every single day—literally, every single day—either myself or a member of my office was on the phone with either Chief Morris or Councillor Sam McKay drafting and exchanging drafts of the government's response. Eventually the best-effort draft that the government had put together, which in my view responds to 95% of the KI proposal, was filed in court. So, in fact, the member has his facts wrong again.

**Mr. Howard Hampton:** I met with Chief Donny Morris just a few days ago at the jail in Thunder Bay, and he continues to dispute your version of events. He says you made one trip to the First Nation where you spent about an hour with some of the elders and had supper with them, but there was no discussion. You made another public relations visit on an entirely different issue, when there was no discussion about the proposal put forward by Kitchenuhmaykoosib Inninuwug.

So my question is this: It is certainly not consultation to go in for a one-hour public relations visit. It's certainly not consultation to meet with elders in the community but fail to respond. When is the McGuinty government finally going to respond to the good-faith proposal put forward by Chief Donny Morris on January 17 of this year?

**Hon. Michael Bryant:** I think it's important for the Legislature to know that in addition to the letter of intent and the changes to the memorandum of understanding that were filed in court and were exchanged with Chief Morris and council several times by way of e-mail, by way of fax and by way of telephone conversation, there was an additional update to that response, and, in an effort to try and be helpful, we had it translated. So, in addition to the three versions that were eventually filed in the court, we also translated the response to the KI proposal that was put forward.

I do in fact look forward to visiting that community again in the future, and I also look forward to continuing to work with that community, because we will find a solution.

## NORTHERN ECONOMY

**Mr. Bill Mauro:** My question is to the Minister of Northern Development and Mines. In the McGuinty government's 2007 budget, we appointed Dr. Bob Rosehart, a former president of Lakehead University in Thunder Bay, as the northwestern Ontario economic facilitator. His mandate was to work with local people and businesses to help inspire a new generation of growth in the northwest. As we know, he delivered his report on March 20.

Some of the louder naysayers across the aisle complained, as is their style, that it was too little too late, or that we were somehow trying to bury it in the lead-up to our budget. We simply won't share in their pessimism. But I do have to ask the minister: Now that the Rosehart report is in your hands, what specific actions are you going to take to address the recommendations in it?



**Hon. Michael Gravelle:** Thank you very much for the question, and I want to compliment my colleague as well for the hard work that I see he does every day on behalf of economic revitalization in northern Ontario.

I'm very pleased to inform the House that our government has already begun work on several initiatives that directly respond to Dr. Rosehart's recommendations, some of which were included in our budget last week, including the acceleration of the business education tax reduction for northern municipalities, which will result in millions of dollars in savings for Thunder Bay businesses alone and over \$70 million for northern Ontario businesses across the north.

A \$25-million investment was announced towards the creation of a bio-economy research centre in Thunder Bay, creating great excitement in Thunder Bay, and one of the key recommendations of Dr. Rosehart related to investment in the research economy;

Also, a \$20-million, four-year investment in geological mapping, a tremendous investment in terms of future exploration. Dr. Rosehart focused on that, and certainly we're committed to following up and doing more in terms of Dr. Rosehart's recommendations.

**Mr. Bill Mauro:** These are important investments in the knowledge and resource economies in the northwest. I know that over the course of Dr. Rosehart's work, he conducted in excess of 120 meetings, including 16 municipalities and over 20 First Nations leaders.

I recall that Dr. Rosehart delivered another report to government in the late 1980s, and some of those recommendations helped in the development of the northern Ontario heritage fund, which I'm happy to see we will be increasing to \$100 million by 2011, as well as the Northern Ontario School of Medicine.

I know there are some short-term and long-term recommendations in this current report. In that regard, Minister, what are your future intentions with the report, since we are already on the way to accomplishing some of those recommendations?

**Hon. Michael Gravelle:** Certainly we're all very excited about the work that Dr. Rosehart has done. He was absolutely the right person to ask to do the job.

I want to assure my colleague and all members of the House that initiatives such as the northern Ontario growth plan, and our record investments—again, a new record of investments—in northern highways will also respond to Dr. Rosehart's recommendations.

My ministry has also been working on a strategy to implement other aspects of the report. In that regard, I was pleased to officially open my satellite minister's office in Thunder Bay yesterday, which is also in keeping with Dr. Rosehart's recommendation to increase our government's presence in the north. The opening of that office speaks to the McGuinty government's continued commitment to work closely with northerners. It also provides the people of northwestern Ontario easier access to their Minister of Northern Development and Mines, which I believe will foster an even greater positive relationship.

Last week's budget clearly showed the McGuinty government's commitment to the north. Dr. Rosehart's work is another reflection of that commitment, as we are eager to move forward on developing a long-term vision for northern Ontario's economic growth—

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** New question.

## CORRECTIONAL FACILITIES

**Ms. Laurie Scott:** My question is for the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services. Are you aware that the Central East Correctional Centre in Lindsay has continued to accept new inmates, knowing that the facility has been in lockdown as a result of a contagious virus that has swept through the facility? Further, are you aware that since the facility is in lockdown, the inmates are not being transported to the courts to have their bail hearings?

Minister, could you explain to this House why healthy people are being exposed to a contagious virus, and why accused persons are being denied their constitutional right to have a bail hearing forthwith?

1510

**Hon. Rick Bartolucci:** I look forward to answering the question. Certainly, there is a process in place to isolate those inmates who have come in contact with the illness. Ministry policy is designed to ensure that inmates are treated in a responsible way, and that those new inmates coming into the facility are not put in contact with those inmates with viruses. We are using modern technology, such as video recording, to ensure that the processes are maintained as normally as possible as we work through this virus, which we hope will only last between 24 and 48 hours.

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Supplementary?

**Mr. Garfield Dunlop:** To the minister: The outbreak has been going on for five days, and as far as we know, you cannot do a bail-hearing-by-video remand. This complete disregard for public health and constitutional rights speaks to the government's complete disregard for Ontarians and the fact that they are completely unprepared to deal with a public health pandemic. What are you doing about this, Mr. Minister? What is your plan? Why are you still accepting inmates, as we speak, into a locked-down facility?

**Hon. Rick Bartolucci:** In fact, the member isn't correct. With consent, you can have video bail hearings.

I want to congratulate the staff at the centre. They're doing a remarkable job. They're ensuring that any new inmates who come in are screened. I have to be perfectly honest with you, Speaker, and to the member: The staff at that facility are handling this outbreak in a very, very professional way. I would suggest he should get on his feet and thank those people who are working very, very hard to keep the system as normal as possible as we work through this virus, which we hope will be done within the next 24 to 48 hours.



## CONSERVATION

**Mr. Paul Miller:** My question is to the Premier. Premier, I've been asking earlier in the week—I didn't get an answer from the one minister for a health reason and I didn't get one from the other minister when he took over. I've been asking you about the Eramosa Karst, and I'm not getting any direct answers once again. Why is the McGuinty government, through its ORC public consultation, leaning toward selling these 80 acres for development, instead of doing what's right and donating it now to the Hamilton Conservation Authority to ensure long-term protection of this wonder, the karst?

**Hon. Dalton McGuinty:** To the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal.

**Hon. David Caplan:** The member has left out some critical information. The first is that the lands are already designated under the city of Hamilton. I believe the former municipal councillor in the city of Hamilton should know that the city of Hamilton official plan, Hamilton Conservation Authority and the province have established strict environmental criteria for permitting development in this area. The member knows this full well.

In fact, the Ontario Realty Corp. is currently studying the lands from a number of perspectives—certainly, environmental, archaeological, geological, hydrogeological—and trying to determine what, if any, provincial lands need to be protected and what the best use of those lands would be. Once the Ontario Realty Corp. has completed those studies, it will be working with the city, as we always do, and with the conservation authority and with the community to continue to ensure that, through the review of the ORC studies—to best decide the use of the provincial property, taking into account community concerns—

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Thank you, Minister. Supplementary?

**Mr. Paul Miller:** Unfortunately, the information is incorrect that the minister is telling us. Processes like the current ORC public consultation will allow well-financed developers' interests to overshadow those of the people who live near, support the designation and enjoy the unique features of this karst. When their interests are fully supported by experts in the environment, they should be paramount, not those of developers who do not live in the neighbourhood, do not seem to care about this unique geological feature and are driven only by money to be made at any cost.

Will you do the right thing for the Hamilton environment, forgo the money the government would get from the developers of this land, effectively putting the money back into the community, and announce now, Minister, that these lands are being transferred to the Hamilton Conservation Authority? Will you do this?

**Hon. David Caplan:** The member is quite woefully misinformed. In fact, the Ontario Realty Corp. is working very closely with the city, with the Hamilton Conservation Authority and, in fact, with the local residents. As I

have indicated, once the studies are completed we'll be working with those groups to ensure the thorough review of ORC studies to discuss the best use for this property, taking into account the community's concerns.

I know that, as I indicated earlier, the lands are currently designated in Hamilton's official plan for urban development. The member should know this, and—

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Question period has expired.

## VISITORS

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** I'd just like to take this opportunity, on behalf of the member from York-Simcoe, to welcome the grade 11 class from Keswick High School to Queen's Park today. Welcome to Queen's Park.

## PETITIONS

## LORD'S PRAYER

**Mr. Bill Murdoch:** I have a petition from Full Gospel Temple in Wiarton. It's to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the current Liberal government is proposing to eliminate the Lord's Prayer from daily proceedings in the Ontario Legislature; and

"Whereas the recitation of the Lord's Prayer has opened the Legislature every day since the 19th century; and

"Whereas the Lord's Prayer's message of forgiveness and the avoidance of evil is universal to the human condition; it is a valuable guide and lesson for a chamber that is too often an arena of conflict; and

"Whereas recognizing the diversity of the people of Ontario should be an inclusive process, not one which excludes traditions such as the Lord's Prayer;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, ask the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to preserve the daily recitation of the Lord's Prayer by the Speaker in the Legislature."

I have signed this and I will give it to Alex to take for me.

## HOME CARE

**M<sup>me</sup> France Gélinas:** I have a petition from SEIU and from the people of Clinton, Seaforth, Goderich and Brucefield.

"Whereas the Ontario government has continued the practice of competitive bidding for home care services; and

"Whereas the competitive bidding process has increased the privatization of Ontario's health care delivery, in direct violation of the Commitment to the Future of Medicare Act, 2004; and



"Whereas competitive bidding for home care services has decreased both the continuity and quality of care available to home care clients; and

"Whereas home care workers do not enjoy the same employment rights, such as successor rights, as all other Ontario workers have, which deprives them of termination rights, seniority rights and the right to move with their work when their employer agency loses a contract;

...

"We call on the government of Ontario:

"(1) to immediately stop the competitive bidding for home care services so home care clients can receive the continuity and quality of care they deserve; and

"(2) to extend successor rights under the Labour Relations Act to home care workers to ensure the home care sector is able to retain a workforce that is responsive to clients' needs."

I support that petition and will affix my name to it.

#### ANTI-SMOKING LEGISLATION

**Mr. Charles Sousa:** This is a petition in support of private Bill 11.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas children exposed to second-hand smoke are at a higher risk for respiratory illnesses including asthma, bronchitis and pneumonia, as well as sudden infant death syndrome ... and increased incidences of cancer and heart disease in adulthood; and

"Whereas the Ontario Medical Association supports a ban on smoking in vehicles when children are present, as they have concluded that levels of second-hand smoke can be 23 times more concentrated in a vehicle than in a house because circulation is restricted within a small space; and

"Whereas the Ipsos Reid poll conducted on behalf of the Ontario Tobacco-Free Network indicates that eight in 10 (80%) of Ontarians support 'legislation that would ban smoking in cars and other private vehicles where a child or adolescent under 16 years of age is present'; and

"Whereas Nova Scotia, California, Puerto Rico, and South Australia recently joined several jurisdictions of the United States of America in banning smoking in vehicles carrying children;

"We, the undersigned, respectfully petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to approve Bill 11 and amend the Smoke-Free Ontario Act to ban smoking in vehicles carrying children 16 years of age and under."

I sign my name.

#### LORD'S PRAYER

**Ms. Lisa MacLeod:** One thousand, five hundred and forty-five people from the city of Ottawa have signed a petition calling on the McGuinty Liberals to retain the Lord's Prayer.

"Whereas Premier Dalton McGuinty has called on the Ontario Legislature to consider removing the Lord's Prayer from its daily proceedings; and

"Whereas the Lord's Prayer has been an integral part of our parliamentary heritage that was ... established in 1793 under Lieutenant Governor John Graves Simcoe; and

"Whereas the Lord's Prayer is today a significant part of the religious heritage of millions of Ontarians of culturally diverse backgrounds;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario to continue its long-standing practice of using the Lord's Prayer as part of its daily proceedings."

I will affix my signature with the other 1,545 people from the city of Ottawa and present it to page Samuel.

1520

#### HOME HEALTH CARE SUPPLIES

**Ms. Andrea Horwath:** I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the WSIB has changed their policies and now requires injured workers to purchase their health care equipment and supplies from one of only three suppliers; and

"Whereas none of these mandated suppliers can possibly provide the expertise, care, experience and personal knowledge that my current supplier offers;

"I, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Rescind the WSIB purchasing policy that forces injured workers to leave their current health care supplier and purchase their health care supplies and equipment from only a list of three suppliers."

I support this petition. I've signed it and send it to the table by way of page Michael.

#### ROUTE 17

**M. Jean-Marc Lalonde:** J'ai une pétition provenant de citoyens de Hawkesbury, Rockland, Vankleek Hill et L'Original.

« À l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario :

« Attendu que l'ancien gouvernement de l'Ontario a transféré la responsabilité de la route 17 aux municipalités, la ville d'Ottawa et des comtés unis de Prescott et Russell;

« Attendu que les municipalités n'ont pas les fonds suffisants pour l'entretien, la réfection de la route ou des ponts, sans mentionner d'élargissement;

« Attendu qu'en 2001, l'administration des comtés unis de Prescott et Russell a estimé à 21 000 véhicules par jour la circulation en semaine sur la 17 à l'entrée de la cité Clarence-Rockland et que depuis, ce chiffre a augmenté » à plus de 25 000;

« Attendu que cette artère principale transférée aux municipalités est une route transcanadienne dans un état lamentable et continue à souffrir du temps et de l'achalandage de plus en plus important;

« Attendu que les membres du personnel du MTO régional avaient recommandé et accepté tel que présenté par la commission de révision régionale en date du 27

avril 1992 que la route 17 soit retenue comme une route collectrice provinciale suivant l'achèvement de la route 417;

« Attendu que la ville d'Ottawa continue à émettre des permis de construire, ce qui devient une question de sécurité;

« Attendu que la population de l'est de l'Ontario exige les mêmes services de sécurité routière;

« Nous, soussignés, adressons à l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario la pétition suivante :

« Nous demandons au ministère des Transports de l'Ontario de reprendre immédiatement la responsabilité de la route 17/174 et de procéder à son élargissement de la cité Clarence-Rockland à la ville d'Ottawa ».

J'y ajoute ma signature avec fierté.

### LORD'S PRAYER

**Mr. Frank Klees:** I present this petition, which was delivered to me by the Reverend Mary E. Bowes of the Wexford Presbyterian Church and the Ghorri family, including University of Toronto students Monica Ghorri and Anita Ghorri. The petition reads as follows:

"Petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Premier Dalton McGuinty has called on the Ontario Legislature to consider removing the Lord's Prayer from its daily proceedings; and

"Whereas the Lord's Prayer has been an integral part of our parliamentary heritage that was first established in 1793 under Lieutenant Governor John Graves Simcoe; and

"Whereas the Lord's Prayer is today a significant part of the religious heritage of millions of Ontarians of culturally diverse backgrounds;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario to continue its long-standing practice of using the Lord's Prayer as part of its daily proceedings."

I'm pleased to affix my signature in support of this petition.

### DAVID DUNLAP OBSERVATORY

**Mr. Reza Moridi:** I present to you today about 700 signatures which were presented to me during the rally held at Queen's Park on January 16.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the David Dunlap Observatory in Richmond Hill is of historical and heritage significance;

"Whereas the land was donated in trust by the Dunlap family to the University of Toronto in 1935, and the pre-Confederation farmhouse is still standing;

"Whereas the observatory, featuring the largest optical telescope in Canada, has been the site of scientific discoveries; it has been a place of learning not only for students of the University of Toronto, but for the general public as well;

"Whereas the observatory has been recently declared by the University of Toronto as 'surplus' to its academic needs, and subject to sale for development;

"Whereas the observatory sits in an incredibly unique and beautiful 180 acres of green space, the largest such space in the town of Richmond Hill, with trees, birds, animals, plants, insects and butterflies in the middle of a rapidly urbanized area;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to support the protection of this property of such historical, scientific and natural significance" from being used as commercial development.

I'll sign it.

### LORD'S PRAYER

**Ms. Laurie Scott:** "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the current Liberal government is proposing to eliminate the Lord's Prayer from its place at the beginning of daily proceedings in the Legislature; and

"Whereas the recitation of the Lord's Prayer has opened the Legislature every day since the 19th century; and

"Whereas the Lord's Prayer's message is one of forgiveness, of providing for those in need of their 'daily bread' and of preserving us from the evils we may fall into; it is a valuable guide and lesson for a chamber that is too often an arena of conflict; and

"Whereas recognizing the diversity of the people of Ontario should be an inclusive process, not one which excludes traditions such as the Lord's Prayer;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, ask the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to preserve the daily recitation of the Lord's Prayer by the Speaker in the Legislature."

It's been signed by hundreds of people from my riding, and I'll hand it over to page Adam.

### EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

**Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti:** I have a petition here with several signatures on it. It was presented to me by Sonny Sansone, a community activist in my community. It's addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the federal government's employment insurance surplus now stands at \$54 billion; and

"Whereas over 60% of Ontario's unemployed are not eligible for employment insurance because of Ottawa's unfair eligibility rules; and

"Whereas an Ontario worker has to work more weeks to qualify and receives fewer weeks of benefits than other Canadian unemployed workers; and

"Whereas the average Ontario unemployed worker gets \$4,000 less in EI benefits than unemployed workers in other provinces and thus not qualifying for many retraining programs;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to press the federal government to reform the employment insurance program and to end the discrimination and unfairness towards Ontario's unemployed workers."



I agree with this petition, affix my signature to it and give it page Charat, who is here with me today, also from Scarborough Southwest.

### LORD'S PRAYER

**Mrs. Julia Munro:** "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the current Liberal government is proposing to eliminate the Lord's Prayer from its place at the beginning of daily proceedings in the Legislature; and

"Whereas the recitation of the Lord's Prayer has opened the Legislature every day since the 19th century; and

"Whereas the Lord's Prayer's message is one of forgiveness, of providing for those in need of their 'daily bread' and of preserving us from the evils we may fall into; it is a valuable guide and lesson for a chamber that is too often an arena of conflict; and

"Whereas recognizing the diversity of the people of Ontario should be an inclusive process, not one which excludes traditions such as the Lord's Prayer;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, ask the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to preserve the daily recitation of the Lord's Prayer by the Speaker in the Legislature."

I would like to add my signature to this and also thank those people from the communities of Keewatin and Kenora for bringing this to the House.

### EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

**Mr. Lou Rinaldi:** I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the federal government's employment insurance surplus now stands at \$54 billion; and

"Whereas over 75% of Ontario's unemployed are not eligible for employment insurance because of Ottawa's unfair eligibility rules; and

"Whereas an Ontario worker has to work more weeks to qualify and receives fewer weeks of benefits than other Canadian unemployed workers; and

"Whereas the average Ontario unemployed worker gets \$4,000 less in EI benefits than unemployed workers in other provinces and thus not qualifying for many retraining programs;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to press the federal government to reform the employment insurance program and to end this discrimination and unfairness towards Ontario's unemployed workers."

I add my signature, and I'll have Alex deliver it to the table.

### WYE MARSH WILDLIFE CENTRE

**Mr. Garfield Dunlop:** This is a petition from the Wye Marsh Wildlife Centre to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Wye Marsh Wildlife Centre, located in the township of Tay, manages approximately 3,000 acres of environmentally sensitive land which is owned by the province of Ontario; and

"Whereas over 50,000 people visit the Wye Marsh Wildlife Centre each year; and

"Whereas over 20,000 students from across Ontario visit the Wye Marsh Wildlife Centre each year, receiving curriculum-based environmental education not available in schools; and

"Whereas the Wye Marsh Wildlife Centre receives no stable funding from any level of government;

"We, the undersigned, petition the province of Ontario to establish a reasonable and stable long-term funding formula so that the Wye Marsh Wildlife Centre can continue to operate and exist into the future."

I'm pleased to sign this and hand it to Daniel to present to the table.

1530

### HOSPITAL FUNDING

**Mr. Bob Delaney:** I have a petition to the Ontario Legislative Assembly that was mailed to me recently by the Westland family of Trelawny Circle in western Mississauga. I want to thank them for their efforts on behalf of our community. It reads as follows:

"Whereas wait times for access to surgical procedures in the western GTA area served by the Mississauga Halton LHIN are growing despite the vigorous capital project activity at the hospitals within the Mississauga Halton LHIN boundaries; and

"Whereas 'day surgery' procedures could be performed in an off-site facility, thus greatly increasing the ability of surgeons to perform more procedures, alleviating wait times for patients, and freeing up operating theatre space in hospitals for more complex procedures that may require post-operative intensive care unit support and a longer length of stay in hospital;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care allocate funds in its 2008-09 capital budget to begin planning and construction of an ambulatory surgery centre located in western Mississauga to serve the Mississauga-Halton area and enable greater access to 'day surgery' procedures that comprise about four fifths of all surgical procedures performed."

It's an excellent petition. I'm pleased to support it, to affix my signature and to ask page Christopher to carry it.

### EMERALD ASH BORER

**Mr. Toby Barrett:** The petition is entitled, "Stop the Emerald Ash Borer Invasion," and signatures have come in from Canfield, Port Rowan, Cayuga, Hagersville, Charlotteville, Windham and Simcoe.

"Whereas the emerald ash borer poses a dangerous threat to our forests in Norfolk county and across the province of Ontario; and

"Whereas if the emerald ash borer is not effectively controlled, it is expected to spread across the entire range of ash, causing widespread tree mortality; and

"Whereas the Canadian Food Inspection Agency has not yet determined a quarantine site; and

"Whereas there have not been any promises of financial aid to the municipalities dealing with the emerald ash borer;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

"That the Minister of Natural Resources maintain pressure on the federal government of Canada to name the quarantine site and provide financial aid to the affected municipalities to stop the spread of the emerald ash borer."

I sign this petition.

#### NOTICE OF DISSATISFACTION

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Pursuant to standing order 37(a), the member for Parkdale–High Park has given notice of her dissatisfaction with the answer given by the Premier in last Thursday's question period to her question concerning affordable housing. This matter will be debated today at 6:10 p.m.

#### ORDER OF BUSINESS

**Hon. Michael Bryant:** Mr. Speaker, I seek unanimous consent with respect to an agreement in regard to a deferred vote.

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Agreed? Agreed.

**Hon. Michael Bryant:** I move, in language that I'm sure will soon be corrected and formalized by the table, that the vote on the budget bill be deferred until tomorrow at deferred votes.

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Agreed? Agreed.

#### ORDERS OF THE DAY

##### 2008 ONTARIO BUDGET

Resuming the debate adjourned on March 27, 2008, on the motion that this House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government.

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** The member for Thunder Bay–Atikokan.

**Mr. Bill Mauro:** It's indeed my pleasure to rise today and offer my comments on our government's budget, introduced just last week in this Legislature. I should advise the Chair at the beginning that I will be sharing my 20 minutes with the—

**Mr. Gilles Bisson:** On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: There was an agreement that the time be divided equally

between the three parties, and I would ask that that be respected.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott):** I am not aware of any such agreement. In order for that to happen, we would need the unanimous consent of the House.

I recognize the government House leader on this.

**Hon. Michael Bryant:** I'll speak to the whip for the third party. We can bring the motion whenever, right, Speaker?

**Mr. Gilles Bisson:** No, we have to do it now.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott):** If you wish to do it, you can seek unanimous consent of the House to divide the time.

**Mr. Gilles Bisson:** Okay, I'll do it.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott):** I recognize the member for Timmins–James Bay on his point of order.

**Mr. Gilles Bisson:** Mr. Speaker, I ask for unanimous consent that we split the time amongst the three parties in the rest of this debate this afternoon.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott):** The member for Timmins–James Bay has sought the unanimous consent of the House to split the time equally amongst the three parties. Is there agreement in the House?

I hear a dissenting voice. I return to the member for Thunder Bay–Atikokan, who has the floor.

**Mr. Bill Mauro:** Again, I will be sharing my time with the member from Mississauga–Erindale.

I do rise today to offer my support for our government's budget, tabled here just last week. We on this side of the House are looking forward to the support of the two opposition parties opposite as we move forward.

At their core, these budgets are an allocation of resources that are provided to us by the taxpayers in the province of Ontario. As such, our budget particularly is a great reflection of the priorities of most of the people in the province of Ontario.

I want to highlight some of the broader themes that were in the budget that especially resonate for me in Thunder Bay–Atikokan, my riding, but I think also for most of the people across northwestern Ontario.

The business community, I must say, is extremely pleased with what we've done in this budget, especially on two components of it, one being the acceleration of the elimination of the business education tax, and I'll speak a little bit more broadly on that in a little while; and the capital tax piece, which is primarily focused on the resource and manufacturing sector and is going to put \$190 million back into the pockets of those companies should this budget bill get passed. We look forward to the support of the opposition members in that regard.

Support for seniors: always something that we attempt to do in our budgets, a reflection of how we feel about the contribution that seniors have made to this province over the past number of years. I'll speak a bit more to the specifics in that regard as well.

Major investments in infrastructure: I think many of us have had the opportunity to discuss these investments with our mayors and our reeves, and I know that those



whom I've discussed this with in northwestern Ontario are especially pleased with us finding the fiscal capacity and the fiscal room to ensure that we continue to invest in these much-needed projects. I have to tell you, coming from a large geographic riding where we have small municipalities with low assessments and low tax bases, that these investments in infrastructure are greatly appreciated.

Economic development was a theme in the budget as well.

MMRC in Thunder Bay—the Molecular Medicine Research Centre—and the Centre for Research and Innovation: great moves to try to diversify the economy of northwestern Ontario. I'll talk a bit more broadly about those as well.

I'm thrilled to see the increase and the commitment from our government to move the northern Ontario heritage fund from \$60 million up to \$100 million. I'm very happy to see that program growing. It's something that I had a hand in redesigning during our first mandate to engage and involve more private sector people in their ability to access the money that's in that fund.

Initiatives in our poverty reduction strategy: dental, food, nutrition and things like that.

These are some of the broad themes that we've addressed.

Of course, to do that, we had to have the fiscal capacity to allow us to make those investments in services, in infrastructure and economic development, and in our poverty reduction strategy. I contrast that with the landscape that we found when we came to government in October 2003 after eight or nine years of Conservative government. During that time, as many of us will remember, the American economy was very strong and Ontario was following right along as primarily an export-driven economy. The Conservatives made a decision to follow their ideological agenda of tax cuts. Most of us won't disagree that where we can, tax cuts are not a bad idea, but we have to pay for them somehow. They always come with a cost, and in that eight- or nine-year period, the cost associated with their tax cuts was a serious and severe reduction in services.

What did we see during those eight or nine years? We saw a significant downloading of the services onto the backs of municipalities. I was a municipal councillor. In October 2003—I think fully 38 of us came into this place as first-timers—many of us were municipal councillors who were prompted to run provincially for the first time directly as a result of our experience of the downloading exercise conducted by the Conservatives during those eight or nine years, that supposed revenue-neutral exercise that left Thunder Bay holding the bag on about \$7 million annually.

1540

I remember a specific experience when I visited Timmins in my capacity as the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Northern Development and Mines, where he told me about the 30 miles of road that had been

downloaded to a municipality the size of Timmins—just drastic.

MNR offices: 70 of them closed, a 30% to 40% reduction in staff. Ministry of the Environment: 50%, 40% reduction in staff, and we saw the results of what happens when you're not careful with what you do at the Ministry of the Environment. That report drew a direct link between what happened in that ministry and Walkerton.

We saw a government that was selling off assets. They found it necessary to sell off assets at a time when the economy was doing well. Highway 407, of course, is the obvious example. It was sold for \$3 billion. Many people estimate the value at about \$8 billion, maybe as high as \$12 billion, but for some good reason, when all that news was going on, they found it necessary to sell off that asset.

This is the backdrop that we found when we came to government: a strong economy, with a low currency of a 62-cent Canadian dollar, cheap oil and a strong American economy—still downloading services, still selling off assets, still cutting public services while they downloaded services onto the backs of municipalities. And what did we end up with? A \$5.6-billion deficit. And as we all remember, we found out afterwards why they didn't want to present that budget in this Legislature—history will show it to be called the Magna budget—\$5.6 billion, as was documented for us by the former Provincial Auditor six months after the election. That was the big promise leading into the 2003 election. We found out exactly what that meant.

Of course, we know we had the backdrop of what was left to us by the NDP as well. Once in a while, it's funny to look across the room when they try to give us a bit of a lesson on how to manage an economy when they left us with about a \$50-billion or \$55-billion debt in their five years of governing in the province of Ontario.

I want to read into the record, in the last two or three minutes that I have, some of the great investments that we made in infrastructure in my riding of Thunder Bay—Atikokan. Two programs—the \$400 million that was announced in the budget—led directly to these investments: in the city of Thunder Bay, \$2 million; in the community of Atikokan, \$146,000; in the community of Neebing, \$198,000; O'Connor, \$45,000; Oliver Paipoonge, \$476,000; Gillies, \$35,000; and for Conmee, \$52,000. That was the budgeted allocation of \$400 million.

On the MIII program, the municipal infrastructure investment initiative, the city of Thunder Bay received an additional \$1 million for the Harbour Expressway bridge; the township of Atikokan received \$1.6 million for downtown revitalization; the township of Gillies received \$40,000 for a community recycling centre; the municipality of Neebing received \$1.6 million for the realignment of Sturgeon Bay Road; and the municipality of Oliver Paipoonge received \$1.4 million for the Nor-West rec centre.

I can tell you, in discussion with my northern mayors and reeves—Mayor Brown in Atikokan, Harasen in



Neebing, Nelson in O'Connor, Kloosterhuis in Oliver Paipooonge, Vanlenthe in Gillies and Rydholm in Conmee—they expressed a deep sense of satisfaction and thanks for the investments that we've made. Those large geographic semi-rural areas that have the small assessment bases and the small tax bases are extremely appreciative when governments find the fiscal capacity to make investments in infrastructure which are drastically needed.

A couple of quick things before I close; I only have about a minute left. I want to thank the Minister of Health, the Minister of Finance and the Premier for committing in this budget to the funding of the PSA test for men. I introduced two private member's bills in that regard, and I want to thank our government for moving forward on that, with this policy piece coming forward on January 1, in short order; an issue widely regarded, widely respected, widely supported all across Ontario. And I want to thank them once again for the capacity we've had to make continued investments in health care for increased volumes in cancer, cardiac, cataract, hips and knees, MRIs and especially the angioplasty program in Thunder Bay, a commitment that I made leading up to the election in 2003, a program that is now up and running and enabling 400 to 500 people in the riding of the Thunder Bay—Atikokan, when fully operational, to no longer have to leave Thunder Bay Regional Health Sciences Centre—a service they can get in their home community and not have to travel. They'll be able to have their loved ones around them when they're having this very emotional intervention conducted.

My time is up. I look forward to the support of all in the House when our budget is presented. Thank you very much.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott):** I'm pleased to recognize the Minister of Small Business.

**Hon. Harinder S. Takhar:** I'm actually very pleased to be following my colleague from Thunder Bay—Atikokan. He has briefly touched on how this budget affects businesses. I want to talk about how this budget really affects small and medium-sized businesses, but before I do that, I want to talk about what small and medium-sized businesses really mean to us and our economy.

Some 99% of all businesses in Ontario employ less than 500 people, and that is the definition: less than 500 people and we consider them under small and medium-sized businesses. They represent about 99%, or 360,000 small and medium-sized businesses in Ontario. They employ about 2.8 million Ontarians, and they create about \$230 billion in economic activity. So small and medium-sized businesses are really important to our economy, and that's why I want to talk about how this budget actually addresses some of the issues that have been facing our small businesses for a very, very long time.

It is a fact that since our government took power, we have created about 456,000 jobs. In fact, I should say that the businesses have created that many jobs. This has happened in spite of the fact that our Canadian dollar has

moved up almost 30% to 40% in the last few years, that our oil prices are at \$100 a barrel, and that the US economy is showing signs of some problems, especially in their home-building sector and also in their financial sector. But our economy has been very resilient, and it has proven that we have been much more successful in the reshaping of our economy, in that it has continued to create jobs.

I want to talk about four different points on how this budget addresses the issues that are facing small and medium-sized businesses.

Number one is training and assistance to workers impacted. Whenever anybody loses a job—and it has happened to all of us in our families—it is a painful experience. The first thing workers look for when they lose their jobs is if there is any assistance available for them to actually start a career again. In this budget, the Minister of Finance has been able to allocate about \$355 million for a Second Career strategy. This is specially designed to assist the workers who have been in the manufacturing industry. It will support about 20,000 people. What this does is, if somebody wants to take a course—whether it's a four-semester or two-year course in a college or university, a recognized course—and they want to improve their skills, they are eligible to get up to \$25,000 towards their tuition and travel fees. That will assist the people who have lost jobs and are in the middle of their careers at this point in time, so that they can actually get settled again in good, well-paying jobs.

The second issue is, sometimes people say, "Hey, can we afford four semesters?" and "Can we afford two years?" In order to address that issue, there is a \$75-million fund that has been created to actually assist people with the apprenticeship programs. That will increase apprenticeship spaces up to 32,000. But in addition to creating more spaces, another \$45 million has been set aside in this budget to enhance our current apprenticeship programs. So what we're really doing is saying that we realize that the manufacturing sector is having some challenges because of the competition from other countries like India and China, and also the economy in the US is facing some challenges, and as a result, our manufacturing sector is facing some challenges. Our Second Career strategy fund and our apprenticeship program fund will help them to resettle their careers again.

The second question then becomes, if the companies are facing some challenges, how can we really help them to move forward? So the strategy I want to talk about is, how do you position firms going forward so that they can be successful?

**1550**

I actually had the chance to visit the Middle East in December, and I had the chance to go to India in January. During those two trips, I had the chance to go and visit the trade shows.

**Mr. John Yakabuski:** What did that cost us?

**Hon. Harinder S. Takhar:** We'll talk about that later.



The trade show that I attended in Dubai is the largest trade show that is held there for construction. What I experienced was that, even though we had the presence of our good companies there, the presence was not to the scale that we really should have there.

It was the same thing when I attended the auto expo in New Delhi. Again, I more or less experienced—at least I got the feeling that we need to assist our companies to showcase our technologies, to showcase our products, in these developing markets. They represent a tremendous opportunity to us, and it also shifts a little bit of our trade from relying on the US to some other countries. So in this budget, we have set aside a \$5-million fund that we have given to the Ontario Chamber of Commerce so that they can actually help these companies to attend the trade shows and showcase their technology.

The second step that we have taken is to address some of the issues facing manufacturing, saying, “If you need assistance with manufacturing, then we will assist you in that regard.” So we have given money to the Canadian export and manufacturing association to help them improve the processes and systems that are needed. And then there’s the \$300 million set aside for innovation as well.

We also looked at our AMIS program and said, “How we can make it more fruitful and worthwhile for our struggling companies?” That program has also helped them to acquire more equipment and so on.

This brings me to the third issue: How can we make our businesses more cost-effective? In order to do that, the first thing we have done is the elimination of the capital tax, going back to January 2007. That was actually supposed to happen this year, but we have gone back a year, to 2007, and eliminated the tax. That will put about \$190 million into our businesses, which will help them.

The second thing is, if you buy new equipment or new machinery—which manufacturers need to do in order to increase their productivity, and which will also help us—what we have done is given them a faster write-off of their equipment, which is the capital cost allowance.

The third thing we’re working on is modernizing our rules and regulations. What we are saying is that if any ministry wants to bring a rule and regulation, they should actually bring one that they will eliminate.

Those are some of the things that we have done. In addition to that, my colleague David Ramsay has made some very strong recommendations to suggest what to do for small and medium-sized businesses, especially in manufacturing. He also attended some of the sessions that I had with the small and medium-sized businesses to see what some of the challenges are that they’re facing. So I want to thank my colleague David Ramsay as well, and say that he did a tremendous job in meeting with the people and making recommendations that have been made part of our budget.

Let me just talk about another issue. If somebody has a really, really brilliant idea, and they work with a university to take their brilliant idea and commercialize it,

for the first time ever in this province we’re actually going to give them a 10-year tax holiday so that they actually keep all those jobs, keep all those ideas, right here in Ontario, which will create more jobs and prosperity for our province.

I’m very proud of this budget, and I really want to thank the Minister of Finance for doing a wonderful job taking all the priorities, all the challenges and balancing them.

**Mr. Toby Barrett:** I wish to respond to the budget speech that came from the member for Thunder Bay–Atikokan.

We held pre-budget hearings in northwestern Ontario and Thunder Bay, and over the past several years we’ve certainly visited Kenora and Atikokan. When I mention Atikokan and Thunder Bay, it does bring to mind the information we received from deputations that this provincial government does have the ability to help out with respect to the tough economic times, not only in the forest industry but other related industries in northwestern Ontario. One thing is to do a better job as far as competitive electricity rates. Obviously, the call from the north is to not close the coal plant in Atikokan and to not close the coal plant in Thunder Bay.

The other real hindrances to any kind of economic recovery in the north, and northwestern Ontario in particular, are the rules, red tape, forms that have to be filled out, and all the things that basically take the fun out of doing business.

Previously, the Minister of Natural Resources responded to questions in this House, and one issue that came up was the mountain pine beetle that is presently being fought by the provincial government in British Columbia. A word of warning: That beetle is moving east and may well be affecting fibre in northwestern Ontario. The BC Forest Service is actively fighting this pest with assistance from the federal government.

What’s good for the north is good for the south. We have tree diseases in the south, and we call again on this Ontario government to come up with the funding and the financial assistance needed to fight not only the emerald ash borer, but also the gypsy moth.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott):** Questions and comments?

**Mr. Gilles Bisson:** I was looking forward to the presentation by the member for Thunder Bay–Atikokan, because I expected that he was going to speak in some detail about the need to bring legislation into this Legislature and to pass legislation that deals with Canadian content in the manufacturing of transit vehicles. He comes from a riding, as you know, where there’s a great number of people who are employed by Bombardier, who basically make GO trains and other equipment for the city of Toronto and others.

I had a bill in the House that unfortunately was defeated about two weeks ago asking the government to make sure that that content be at 50%. I was looking forward to, this Thursday, having a debate on the 60% content rule that the member was proposing. Quite frankly, I



was going to speak in favour of that and support that legislation along with their caucus, but I note that it's no longer on the order paper, so we're not going to have the opportunity to debate that on Thursday.

So I wonder why he would take so much time in a budget bill to talk about congratulating himself and his government on things that they did or didn't do with municipalities, and wouldn't speak about an issue that's so important to the people who work at Bombardier in Thunder Bay and people who work in the transit industry across this province.

People can draw their own conclusions. It's not for me to say he did this or did that or whatever. At the end of the day, all I know is that I was looking forward to Thursday morning; I was going to be here with bells on. I was going to be here to support my colleague from northern Ontario, to support the workers in the transit industry who build the buses, who build the streetcars, who build the subways in this province, many of whom live in his riding. Unfortunately, we're not going to have an opportunity because the government member, Mr. Mauro from Thunder Bay—Atikokan, decided to withdraw the spot and to give it to somebody else to be debated, hopefully, sometime next winter. I would think that probably that bill is never going to see the light of day.

**Mrs. Laura Albanese:** I would like to say that I am pleased with the budget our government presented last week. I believe the budget sets forward some initiatives that are long overdue, and I have great hopes that many of the proposals will benefit the people in the riding of York South—Weston, which I represent here.

I am very encouraged that there will be new investments in health care. I know that my constituents welcome increased attention and funding to efforts to bring emergency room wait times down. I'm also encouraged by two other health initiatives: the proposal to provide dental services to low-income Ontarians, and the chronic disease prevention strategy, starting with diabetes.

I am pleased that we are continuing also to invest in education, offering students a well-rounded program through arts and music, and physical and outdoor education. I believe it's important to motivate kids to stay in school. This is particularly important for kids who are at risk of dropping out, which, in a knowledge economy, we simply can't afford.

1600

I also welcome our investments in English as a second language. Through this budget, the government is making a commitment to improving the quality of life of Ontarians.

Some initiatives are new, such as the property tax grant for seniors, which the residents of York South—Weston are welcoming very warmly, and the funding to rehabilitate existing social housing.

In other cases, the government is building on the approach that developed in our first term, such as the Ontario child benefit. Also, we're doubling the annual funding for the student nutrition program because kids

who arrive at school hungry suffer academic as well as social consequences.

We're also investing in infrastructure. In York South—Weston we're looking forward to the Move Ontario 2020 plan, which will see the Eglinton light rail built.

We are also in need of initiatives that will provide training to individuals, helping them to shift into the new economy through the skills-to-jobs action plan.

I am very pleased to support this budget bill.

**Mr. Randy Hillier:** It disturbs me listening to this budget debate because, as I hear one thing from the government side of the House, I see the actions of the government in my riding. This government speaks of jobs and the need to retrain, but their actions do everything to prevent jobs and to prevent retraining.

I'd like to read a letter that I have from an electrical contractor near my riding who employs people in my riding. He says: "I am constantly turning away young people eager to start in the electrical trade. They are dismayed and, to say the least, disappointed when I tell them about the ratios and that I am unable to sign them up."

"These young people are constantly hearing in the media that there is a shortage of skilled trades and that they are being encouraged to seek employment. But when they do so, they are prevented. The government red tape, restrictions and regulations prevent contractors from hiring our youth and our children and denying them opportunities."

That is not a unique letter. This binder is full of letters that the ministry has received of contractors and our youth looking for work, but being deprived. And it's not just that. There are many reports from the Conference Board of Canada, Ontario's Workforce Shortage Coalition—they're all saying the same thing.

What does the government do? It spends significant amounts of money to train people and then slams the door on them when they want to become productive, responsible members of this province and our society.

The government speaks of showcasing their budget. What they are doing is showcasing their red tape, their restrictions and their regulations that are killing this province.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott):** That concludes the time for questions and comments. One of the government members has two minutes to reply. I'll turn to the Minister of Small Business and Entrepreneurship.

**Hon. Harinder S. Takhar:** I want to thank all the members who participated in this discussion. I want to talk about two points. If you really want to say whether the budget has been accepted well or not, you really see what happens within your own communities.

I want to give you two examples. My colleague from Brampton West actually called Catholic Family Services and told them the kind of assistance we were going to provide to Catholic Family Services in Brampton. Actually, the executive director and the chair called all of us to thank us for what we have done in the budget for them.



The other point is Erinoak. Most of the people who live in Mississauga and York know how wonderful a service they provide to our community. We have been able to actually assist them with a \$1-million fund to do the feasibility study for the building that they wanted built in which to expand services.

Again, all these people were so delighted and so pleased that this budget has at least addressed some of the issues that have been long, long outstanding in this province.

I also want to talk a little bit about what we are doing up north. The business education tax has been a burden in some of these communities, and we have decided that rather than phasing it in over seven years, we're going to phase it in over four years in the northern communities. It will give them \$70 million worth of savings, so that the business environment up north also becomes very competitive. This is in addition to the millions we have taken to eliminate the capital tax on the manufacturing and resource industries, and also providing a capital cost allowance and matching it with the feds.

We are really looking forward to creating an environment in which we can create more jobs.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott):** Further debate?

**Mr. John Yakabuski:** I'm pleased to join the debate on the budget bill. I want to start by way of a correction, and due to the fact that the member is in the House, I feel comfortable in doing that. Yesterday, the member for Huron-Bruce spoke theatrically about this government being the first government since 1908 to have three consecutive balanced budgets, and I do want to correct her on that. The previous government balanced four consecutive budgets and would have balanced a fifth. However, this government took over halfway through that budgetary year and ended up with a deficit at the end of the year. Had the previous government won the election of 2003, they would have balanced a fifth consecutive budget, and in fact that would have been the first time since 1908 that five consecutive budgets would have been balanced.

*Interjections.*

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott):** I'd ask the government members to come to order so as to allow the member to make his presentation.

**Mr. John Yakabuski:** Thank you very much, Speaker. Having clarified that, we will move on in the budget debate.

I did want to touch on a couple of things that the Minister of Small Business and Entrepreneurship spoke about. He spoke about what they are doing for small business and his position that small business and business had created 400,000 jobs in this province under the McGuinty mandate. Well, since 2004, we know that we've lost 194,000 manufacturing jobs in this province. In fact, of the 400,000 net jobs that have been created in this province, fully half of them are in the public sector, fully half of them are government jobs being paid for by the taxpayer—not created in private industry, but by the

taxpayer. Those jobs, we know, are not sustainable in the long term if you don't have a strong economy. That's the problem with this budget: It is not doing what needs to be done to sustain a strong economy.

Some 194,000 manufacturing jobs lost, and the McGuinty government did very little to change the feelings of business and manufacturers in this province about whether or not this is a good, poor or indifferent place to make their investments. That's something they have not addressed, yet they spend huge amounts of money. That is one of the concerns that business actually has: the growth of government.

When this government was elected, the budget in this province was \$68 billion. With this budget, it's \$96 billion. That's a growth rate of 48% between that and capital spending in this province. That exceeds even the growth rate in the David Peterson days—

**Mr. Tim Hudak:** No.

**Mr. John Yakabuski:** Yes—when, if something moved, they taxed it, and they spent money like there was no tomorrow. They actually created the climate. A lot of people talk about the NDP from 1990-95 and how bad it was, with four consecutive budget deficits of over \$10 billion, but in fact, in fairness to the NDP, most of the seeds for that were sown by the Peterson government and their absolutely out-of-control approach to spending the taxpayers' money. We're going down that same road.

I know we hear the jibes over there about, "Well, do you not want us to spend money? You want us to cut this and cut that." That has never, ever been said by people on this side of the House. What we want is responsibility and accountability. It is not about how much money you spend; it's how you spend it and the value you get for the money being spent.

1610

A case in point: a \$5-billion surplus that they didn't project. If you're running a business and you're that poor at forecasting what your revenues and expenditures are going to be over a fiscal period, you're not likely to be in business very long, because you would be considered incompetent—over \$5 billion in revenues that were "unexpected." Are you going to tell me that they didn't know three months ago that they were going to have this money? Of course they did. It didn't show up in the last week. Of course they did.

So they put out an infrastructure program. Of course, people and municipal leaders in my riding are very happy to be getting this money. They can use the money. But they're asking me, "Why? What happened? Where did it come from? What's it for?"

That's the kind of planning that leads to failure. There's an old carpenter's saying: "Measure twice, cut once." What happened to these guys here is that they forgot to measure, they didn't forecast and they cut cheques at the end of the year, just so they could throw the money out the door. So what happened?

In the city of Ottawa they got \$14.6 million under an infrastructure program entitled municipal roads and bridges. That's what it's entitled. But we find that that



money is not going to roads and bridges in the city of Ottawa, because there are no conditions attached to this money by this government: "Here it is; there you go." They go out and the member from Ottawa Centre has big press releases about how this was going to be positive for the city of Ottawa and its roads and bridges. But then we find out that the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, who is also the member for Ottawa West-Nepean, is in a bit of an embarrassing situation. He's got to answer questions in the press as to what's happening with this money in Ottawa.

What we're finding out is that part of it is going to be used for slush. Now we know that this government specializes in slush, but this is literally going to be used for slush. It's going to be used to clear slush and snow that they didn't budget for, as opposed to fixing potholes. I would suggest that the government is again engaging in its practice of slush funds, and the taxpayers got a snow job.

**Mr. Tim Hudak:** Literally.

**Mr. John Yakabuski:** Literally.

I want to talk about some of the things the government failed to do in this budget and some of the things we hoped to see. I believe one of the big failures in this budget is what they failed to do in long-term care. I believe that the people who are residents of long-term care in this province are clearly among our most vulnerable.

I say to the member for Brant that when you talk to long-term-care people in this province, they will say that no government in their memory has treated long-term care poorer than this government right now. In fact, the previous government redeveloped 20,000 beds in this province. This government is only going to start to do it with this budget. As I said, people in long-term care are among our most vulnerable. They needed funds to cure the problems and ailments in long-term care, and what do we get? We get stunts. We get publicity stunts with diapers and other incontinence products.

**Mr. Tim Hudak:** Who talked about diapers?

**Mr. John Yakabuski:** The Minister of Health made a big deal about putting on a diaper, when what he should have been doing is dealing with the real crisis in long-term care. This budget has failed to do that.

They talk about hours of care, etc. When you look at people in a long-term care 30 years ago and compare them to residents in a long-term-care home today, it's night and day, it's apples and oranges. Thirty years ago, many of them drove to the long-term-care home in their own cars, walked in with their own suitcases and wondered where the activities room was. Now, the average age in those long-terms is 85. A good percentage of the people are incontinent, a good percentage of them have cognitive issues, and a large percentage are simply immobile and require assistance; they're not ambulatory on their own in any way, shape or form. You can imagine the care needs for the people in those homes today versus the people who occupied those homes some 30 years ago, or even 20 years ago.

One of the real failures of this government in this budget is the fact that when they had \$5 billion to plan for and work with long-term care, they didn't deal with it. In essence, they did nothing. Yes, there is \$107 million to hire 2,500 personal support workers, but that doesn't even address the deficit they have in personal support workers currently. So long-term care would have to be considered an abject failure on the part of this government in this budget.

The minister spoke about the skills-to-jobs fund—\$1.5 billion in this budget. That sounds like a tremendous amount of money, but when you cipher it all down, you have to ask yourself where the planning was as well. Who are we training the people for? If you're going to be part of creating an environment in this province that actually chases jobs out of the province, maybe we should get Alberta to pay \$1.5 billion to help us retrain them. We can retrain them, but maybe we'd like Alberta to pay for it because, unless we can offer these people employment in this province, that's where they're going.

What are we supposed to do? Give people three months, four months, six months, whatever, of training and a map to Alberta and get back in return a thank-you card from Ed Stelmach saying, "I really appreciate it. These guys are pretty skilled. Nice to have them on the job"? We'd like to have them on the job here in Ontario. But as my colleague from Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington spoke about earlier, how are you supposed to get people on the job when you've got in place a restrictive, strangling regulatory process that when you'd like to build and create some new engineers or some new electricians, you can't get them a job because of the regulations, and this government doesn't seem to want to do anything about it—although I will in fairness say, the Premier said he is going to take a look at it, but I've heard him say that many times, "We're going to take a look at things." He takes a look at the sunrise in the morning, too, I'm sure, but it still comes up in the same spot. We really need to see some action in that regard from that side of the House.

*Interjection.*

**Mr. John Yakabuski:** I lost my train for a second. I thought the member from Brant was saying something that I would be interested in.

So what are we going to do here? A guy wants to take on some new apprentices and he can't, because the only way to take on one apprentice is to have three journeymen. It takes three journeymen to teach one apprentice. Can you imagine if we had that ratio in all of our educational ventures or institutions or whatever, taking three people to teach one person? Jeez, do you think we'd be in a little bit of trouble? We are in trouble at times, there's no question about that, thanks to this government, but we would be in grave trouble if that was the premise we worked on.

So how are you going to give these people an opportunity? It's sort of that Catch-22: You can't get the work; we need you to get some experience. How in the name of God do you ever get experience if you can't get



the job? Those are the challenges. I think this government must, if you really want to improve those prospects, change that regulation. You've got to get out from under the blankets with the unions and really look at what it takes to create meaningful employment in this province.

1620

The minister is right about one thing: It's small business that creates the opportunities in this province. You've got to stop strangling them and constricting them. Help them and give them the opportunity to do what they do best, and that is create jobs and create wealth. Wealth is what you're going to need in this province and wealth is what you're going to be looking for as a result of your out-of-control spending habits. What happens is, you lock yourself in on the spending side. That's what you've done here and that's what you've done since you got into office. You lock yourself in on the spending side, and what happens when the revenue isn't there? That's when governments run into problems.

That's why prudence should be the order of the day, not blowing it out the door at the last minute without proper accounting standards, something that the Auditor General has chastised this government for every year—the lack of accountability at the end of the fiscal year for the money that you put out the door. That is not the way you run a business. It simply won't work.

In the time I have left I do want to talk about a couple of things as well. The Ministry of Natural Resources: It's very disappointing to see that ministry's budget cut yet again under the McGuinty regime. We expect and we ask for the Minister of Natural Resources to do more and more every day. We have some very successful wildlife reintroductions in the province that create a great deal more work for the people in the Ministry of Natural Resources, both from a monitoring point of view and from an enforcement point of view, but we continue to cut their budget. We continue to have challenges with regard to the health of trees in areas of this province and we continue to cut the MNR's budget.

We still have the outstanding issue at the MNR of why you're not putting all monies collected in fees and licences into fish and wildlife programs. When you talk to people in the fish and game clubs, they ask, "Where are the restocking programs that used to be there for the lakes, the good ones?" It's not just today that that's going to be a problem. What about your tourism business down the road? I would expect that the Minister of Tourism, Mr. Fonseca, would have some concerns about that as well because that is a big part of what—

**Mr. Bob Delaney:** Speaker, the standing orders prohibit a member from referring to another member by name, but by ministry and/or riding.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott):** The member is quite correct in the sense that we, from the chair, ask members to refer to other members by the name of their riding or by their ministry. I don't think it's in the standing orders but I will remind the member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke and return to him because he has the floor.

**Mr. John Yakabuski:** Gosh, I'm glad you told me about that, Speaker. It's really good to hear that Mr. Delaney is listening to the speech.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott):** I would ask the member to refer to other members of the House by their riding names—

*Interjection.*

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott):** Okay.

*Interjection.*

**Mr. Tim Hudak:** That's clever.

**Mr. John Yakabuski:** Yes, I'll tell you. That is important.

Anyway, the Minister of Tourism, I'm sure, is concerned about the budget cuts to the Ministry of Natural Resources.

Another thing that I did not see in the budget was the eastern Ontario development fund. It was promised. The Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing says, "Refer to page 40." I've sent a letter asking for clarification on that. They attach a dollar figure to every other item in the budget, but in the case of the eastern Ontario development fund, they simply go on to say that they're going to develop the fund. I think what we need is a clarification that the \$20-million commitment for this year will in fact be forwarded in this fiscal 2008-09 year. I think that is important and it does require some clarification because those people in eastern Ontario are depending on that.

Another issue I wanted to talk about that is very important in my riding—I go back to the skills to jobs—is that there a significant amount of money in this budget for places that teach the new skills. I think that one of the most important places where we could be doing this is Algonquin College in the Ottawa Valley, in my riding of Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke.

There is no higher priority, in my opinion, than a college that has made the argument justifying the replacement of their campus. I would encourage all members to take a look at the proposal for a new campus by Algonquin College in the Ottawa Valley. When you have a riding where there is a single post-secondary institution, I don't think it's a stretch to say that if we don't see a new college there at some point in the near future, we could be without one at some point not too much further down the road.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott):** Questions and comments?

**Mr. Paul Miller:** Just a couple of comments on the presentation. I concur with my colleague from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke in reference to apprenticeships. Apprenticeships are an important part of our society, and they've been lacking indeed. I'll give an example: I have a couple of trades myself, and in the 32 years I practised these trades in the Hamilton area, I had a total of five apprentices. Why? Because our society has geared schooling and our kids toward the leather chair and the computer, and not skilled trades.

Skilled trades are the backbone of this country. We're 200,000 tradesmen short right now, and it's getting worse every day. We have to encourage youth, through our col-



leges, through our student groups, to move toward these types of skilled trades, which pay well; they're high middle-class paying jobs. Obviously, they will be the engine to help stimulate and bring Ontario back to where it belongs.

I haven't seen a lot on forestry in this budget; the previous member didn't mention forestry. I haven't seen a lot on steel. I do see a lot on the auto sector, and I would like to speak to that further.

**Mr. Lou Rinaldi:** I'm delighted to make some comments on the budget. Just a couple of corrections: It was the Auditor General, after we took power in 2003, who made those decisions about your shortfall and your budget; it wasn't us.

**Mr. Tim Hudak:** Not true.

**Mr. Lou Rinaldi:** It's true; it was the Auditor General. And the other thing, for clarification: The eastern Ontario development fund, which the previous government cut, is in this budget. It was in the throne speech, and it's double what the federal folks have delivered for eastern Ontario. So stay tuned it; it's there.

We heard some comments from members of the opposition. I'm just going to read a couple of comments about our budget, from the press in my riding, at a budget breakfast in the great riding of Northumberland—Quinte West.

"From farmers to Northumberland county politicians, it was a bit of a lovefest at Thursday's joint Northumberland central and Port Hope and district chambers of commerce, post-provincial budget breakfast as people thanked Northumberland—Quinte West MPP Lou Rinaldi for a variety of provincial budget windfalls affecting rural and small-town Ontario."

Let me tell you what a farmer at that breakfast said: "Northumberland Federation of Agriculture representative John Boughen said he welcomed the \$56 million for the Pick Ontario Freshness strategy and the same amount of funding for animal husbandry research at the University of Guelph for the Ontario Veterinary College." After that, he turned to the federal member at the breakfast and urged him to make sure they come to the table to help do what the province did in their budget. So that is what the people on the streets in my riding—the business people and farmers—are saying.

1630

**Mr. Robert Bailey:** I'd like to commend the member from Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke for the remarks he made today. I think they're right on. He covered a number of subjects that needed to be addressed.

Just yesterday, I had the privilege of being in eastern Ontario, in the riding of Lanark—Frontenac—Lennox and Addington. I had an opportunity to meet with a number of small business people there, small and medium-sized businesses. At that time, they talked about the problems and issues they had dealing with government red tape and regulations that are just strangling their businesses: The WSIB and the Ministry of Labour overreacting, in their opinion, in a number of cases and restricting their right to

do business and their opportunities to make a living and provide employment to a number of people.

Also, when we talk about a number of people trying to enter the trades in Ontario, there is a real issue with the ratio. Their argument is that we should go to a one-to-one ratio so that they can get more people. There are young people who want to work. They are being encouraged through the education sector, through ads by the government, that there are opportunities, and there certainly are opportunities in construction and in many other fields in this province. But then when they get the education, when they leave school and go there, they cannot get into these trades because of the ratios. So we need to work on that issue. That's an issue we can work on with both employers and union groups. This government should be encouraged to do that as well.

Again, I'd like to commend the speaker from Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke on his remarks today. I think he was right on. Thank you very much.

**Mr. Khalil Ramal:** I was listening to the member opposite speaking about many different things, and he was talking about our initiative in this government and this budget. I don't know—probably he didn't read it very well. I hope you go back and read it because there are a lot of good things in this budget. It focuses on manufacturing jobs, retraining people and investing in the next generation. We believe strongly in this province and this government that the only way we can proceed in the future is by investing in our people, in education, in innovation and research, in colleges and universities, in all these aspects of this society and this community, in order to compete in the future.

I want to give you some examples from my riding of London—Fanshawe. We have a great college and a great university, and they partner with industry—companies and factories—in order to work together to enhance their product, to be able to compete on a national and international level. It is the only way we can compete and maintain our edge in this province.

I think we have a great budget. I'm proud of this budget. We went on the second day to London, myself and my colleagues Deb Matthews and Chris Bentley, and we had a breakfast meeting in the morning. We invited the media and the people of London, and they came and they asked us. They found a lot of support for many different aspects of their needs. For example, we invested \$56 million to clean a contaminated area in my riding. Also, we invested a lot of money in the university for research and innovation. We invested money in roads and bridges. We invested \$11 million in a place called Innovation Industrial Park to support companies and factories that want to come to London. This park would be prepared and ready to host any company, small or large, to come to London, open and hire people from that area, to help our economy and also the economy of the region.

I want to tell you something: Because of that park, because of that initiative we made a long time ago, the city of London was able to invite a company like Original Cakerie from British Columbia to come and open in



my riding of London-Fanshawe. They are going to hire 400 people. The same place was able to attract another company from Korea called Hanwha. They want to invest \$171 million.

All those initiatives wouldn't happen without the support of the province of Ontario, of this government, because we believe strongly that we have to plan for the future. How do you plan for the future? By partnering with municipalities, with communities, with colleges and universities, by creating skilled workers and training them very well for the future, and that's what we do in this budget. Especially, we have a great initiative, with a strategy to train people for the long term to have a better job, a good job.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott):** That concludes the time available for questions and comments. I will return to the member for Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke to respond.

**Mr. John Yakabuski:** I'd like to thank the members for Hamilton East-Stoney Creek, Northumberland-Quinte West, Sarnia-Lambton and London-Fanshawe for their comments.

It looks like we have a tie vote. We had two people in favour of the budget, two people against, and if I could only get to cast the deciding vote and we could settle this whole matter, it would be wonderful. Unfortunately, we will have further debate.

I do want to make one more comment about the ability of businesses to create jobs. When the CFIB had their survey, the number one priority they had was taxes and regulations on small business. This government hasn't done anything to alleviate that load on them.

If you're going to create jobs and improve the jobs that you have, you have to have the ability and the resources to do that. When the government is taking it away, you don't have that. So how do you keep the jobs, let alone improve the jobs for those people who are finding themselves burdened extremely heavily this year on, for example, the cost of heating their home? There was about a 30% rise in home heating cost for fuel oil this year. Seniors, people on fixed income and families with children, who are already on the edge under the McGuinty regime because of the tax burden that has been placed on those people over the four years that they've been in power—the largest tax increases in the province's history. With \$5 million at their disposal, you'd think one of the things they might have looked at was some relief for the individual taxpayer who's burdened by these things, and the small businessman. But no, no; that's not there. What we have is just: "Out the door; get rid of it. If you want to put it into your local slush fund, that's okay. Your local snow job: That's okay. We call it infrastructure; you can do whatever you want with it." That's not the way you run a business and that's not the way you should run a province.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott):** Further debate?

**Mr. Paul Miller:** Mr. Speaker, I'd like to first of all tell you that I'm splitting my time with the member from Timmins-James Bay. He'll be here.

I'm going to approach this with a little bit of a different angle today. In the budget book that the government put out:

"Collective bargaining is never easy, particularly at a time when the economy is challenged. We look forward to negotiating new collective agreements this year with our partner unions that honour the contribution of their members and respect the needs of all Ontarians.

"As we move forward, we want to build new partnerships."

I find this statement really interesting. Yesterday, I brought a bill forward to the committee in reference to protecting Ontarians—union and non-union Ontarians. When a company folds and leaves this province, for whatever reason, back to their country of origin or back to the States or wherever they go—and what do they do? They rip off the employees for their severance, their back pay and their holiday pay.

It's bad enough that these people have to go home—and it's happening all over the province—and tell their spouse, "Oh, by the way, dear, I've lost my job. The two weeks' holiday pay that I'm entitled to, my severance I'm entitled to—one week for every year of service, depending on the agreement—I'm not getting that. So now, I'm 50 years old, I have two kids in college; we can't pay for that. We're going to lose the house if I don't get a similar job, because I'm the only money-earner in the home. At 51 years old, I'll be lucky if I can get another job."

Yesterday, the Liberal contingent of this House—I had support from my friends from the Conservatives, who, I must say, are very lenient when it comes to helping people in Ontario. They at least realize that if someone works for you for 30 years in a company, they should be entitled to their severance and what's coming to them before the banks, creditors and things like that. It was a refreshing moment from the Conservatives. They supported me.

1640

But the Liberals—five of them—shame. They shot down my bill after they passed it in second reading—which I thought was great, and I thought it was going somewhere. I thought they really had a heart. They got me there yesterday, and do you know what their excuse was? They didn't even deal with my bill; they didn't even talk about it; they didn't even ask me a question on it, which I found highly irregular. What did they say to me? They said, "Oh, you didn't follow the proper procedure." I said, "What was that?" "Oh, the House leaders have to talk about it before we agree to do anything." Well, my House leader told me that that's nonsense. This is a self-governing body, a subcommittee, which recommends to the main committee, and the recommendations went forward in support of this bill to at least have hearings and allow the people of Ontario to speak—



**Mr. John Yakabuski:** Who said that, Paul? We want names.

**Mr. Paul Miller:** You'll get them later.

Hearings—it doesn't mean the bill is going to be passed; it doesn't mean there couldn't be adjustments made to the bill; it doesn't mean the bill didn't need some tailoring, so to speak. But people didn't even get that chance, because they killed it and they threw it on the back burner because it wasn't a government bill.

I thought, from the throne speech, from the speeches from the members over there, that when we got to this House as a group, whether we were opposition or not, we were going to work as a team for the people of Ontario. Right here in their own presentation it says, "We're going to work with unions. We're going to work with the people of Ontario." Let me make it clear, these are government unions, but that's only 30% of our total situation.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott):** I have to caution the member. You're not allowed to use your budget document as a prop.

**Mr. Paul Miller:** I'm sorry, Mr. Speaker. I'll withdraw that. My apologies; I'm sorry it's a prop. I won't use the prop; I'll talk.

As a new member coming to this House, hoping that we could work together as a team to pass things to help the people of Ontario, I was set back. I was actually upset because I felt, at least give them their day in court. They didn't even get that. It's disgusting, unbelievable—and those five members should hang their heads and should be ashamed.

The bill's not dead. This government has an opportunity to bring that bill forward like they should have and at least talk about it. It's still sitting there.

**Mr. John Yakabuski:** Give us an opportunity to debate it in committee.

**Mr. Paul Miller:** Give us an opportunity.

I'd like to talk about the budget a little bit.

**Mr. John Yakabuski:** Bring it to committee.

**Mr. Paul Miller:** Bring it to committee.

They brag about job creation: 160,000 jobs. That's absolutely correct, 160,000 new jobs. Where? In the service industry, for \$8 to \$11, \$12 an hour—not the 17,000 jobs that our people have lost in Hamilton, \$50,000, \$60,000, \$70,000 jobs. These \$8.95 McDonald's jobs or whatever don't cut it. They don't buy stoves, they don't buy fridges, they don't buy cars and they don't buy houses. To me, these job creations are—

**Mr. John Yakabuski:** It's another trick.

**Mr. Paul Miller:** —another faux pas.

The most recent victim in Hamilton was Ancam. It's been there for 60 years, a proud company employing 1,000 people in Burlington and Hamilton. It's been shut down. They're going to have to fight for their severance, fight for their pensions and fight for their benefits. And where did the company go? Some went back to the States; some went back to Germany. They took the equipment that they could use. Mind you, the employees didn't get any of that. They didn't get anything in bank-

ruptcy receivership; they got nothing in bankruptcy—nothing. Now they've got to fight for everything.

But this isn't just here. I could name 130 different companies in southern Ontario and about 50 in Hamilton, major employers that have left this province for several reasons. It's got to be the economic policies of the last few years; it's got to be. This goes on and on.

Let's talk about the auto sector. I've sat here and listened to the House members talk about all the money they're sinking into the auto sector. That's true; they are sinking money into it. What are they doing? They're putting bad money in after bad money. Why? Because these jobs—where is the security? Where is the security on these jobs when they bring them forward?

They give them the money because the companies fail to stay in the area. And what do they do? They hold us hostage: "If you don't give us \$100 million, we're going to move to Mexico or across the ocean." So they're holding the taxpayers of this country hostage, which is incorrect. Why isn't this government smart enough to put in clauses that make these companies stick around for a minimum of 10 years or 20 years? Because they won't do it—

*Interjections.*

**Mr. Paul Miller:** Mr. Speaker, I'm having trouble hearing. Maybe you could help me out with this.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott):** I'll ask the government members to refrain from heckling and allow the member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek to come forward and make his presentation.

*Interjections.*

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott):** I'll ask the members a second time to please refrain from heckling and not ignore the Speaker.

**Mr. Paul Miller:** Let's talk about health. Let's talk about long-term care. Let's talk about the reinstatement of physiotherapy and chiropractic services—preventive services that help the elderly, help young people, help injured sports figures so they don't have to go into the hospital for long terms.

**Mr. Gilles Bisson:** Not as injured as your whip will be in 50 seconds.

**Mr. Paul Miller:** That's right. The whip's got his 50 seconds coming up.

In conclusion—I've been notified—there are so many things in this budget that weren't there, from environment to money into the steel sector and the forestry sector. They've dabbled in it. They've touched on certain areas. When you put \$1 billion into infrastructure when we're \$65 billion short, you might be able to fix one large bridge like the Skyway in Hamilton and then you're going to run out of money. Thank you.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott):** Thank you very much. Member for Timmins–James Bay.

**Mr. Gilles Bisson:** I want to thank my colleague the member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek for being so timely in remembering that his whip would like to have some time in this debate. I've got to say, he was bang on.



He gave me an extra 15 seconds. I want to thank him a lot.

I want to speak to a couple of issues that weren't in the budget that I think should have been there. The government announced a number of measures in its budget. Some of them, I'm going to say outright, were okay. I don't have a great objection to them. Some of them may not have gone as far as they could, but governments do what governments do and what they can.

I want to talk specifically on a couple of issues. One is health care. There are a number of communities around Ontario, including mine—the city of Timmins—that have a huge problem when it comes to not enough long-term-care beds to care for people who live in the community. Currently our hospital, the Timmins and District Hospital, carries about 40 to 50 patients—out of a hospital that has about 100-and-some-odd beds—who are basically LC patients. They are people who enter the emergency department, or by other means, who are not able to be released back to their home because their physical condition doesn't allow them to do that, but they can't stay in the hospital because what they really need is a long-term-care bed. The city of Timmins has got a huge problem when it comes to an aging population and not enough beds to house those people who are needing a place to stay, such as Golden Manor or Extendicare in the city of Timmins.

We have been after the provincial government now for some years to do a number of things. I'll give the government some credit. It's done some of the things we called for. We sat down with the government—Mayor Tom Laughren, myself and people from the health sector—about three or four years ago and said, “We need to do a number of things.” We recognize it's not just putting in long-term-care beds that's a solution to this problem. It's got to be a continuum of care, to make sure that people are able to stay at home as long as humanly possible, with support, so that in the end they don't need a long-term care bed, hopefully, and if they do, it's much later in their life. The government has accepted some of our propositions.

Eventually the aging-at-home strategy was one of the things that was brought forward by the city of Timmins. I was there prior to the last election when Minister Smitherman came to Timmins and made the announcement. That was something that grew out of the city of Timmins and the health care workers there. I think we should applaud the work that the people in the city of Timmins did in proposing that. I'm not going to take all the credit—I'm sure other people spoke to the minister—but that's something that was important to us.

The other thing we've talked about is that we need to have transitional housing, in the sense that when a person is no longer able to stay at home with good community support—by way of somebody to help them with their shopping or whatever it might be, in order to keep them in their home independently—we need to have an apartment building that's tied to the Golden Manor or the Extendicare as a way of having a place where people can

stay, people who need a little bit of extra help, who can't get it in the community but certainly would rather not be in a long-term-care facility and should not be there. For example, we did that as a government in the town of Iroquois Falls, where we got a great facility that was built and connected to the North Centennial Manor. It works perfectly.

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But even with all that, long-term-care beds are needed. Even though the city of Timmins, the Timmins and District Hospital, the CCAC, and all those people who are involved in long-term care and health care generally within the city of Timmins, support the initiative of doing things in the community, we are still short of beds. And one of the things that we didn't see in this budget was an initiative to say, “Here's the government's response to the aging population that we have in the province and what we need to do in order to make sure that people in their golden years are taken care of and not left in a hospital bed at the Timmins and District Hospital, as they are now.”

Just in passing, my mother-in-law has been in and out of the hospital since January with some physical conditions. As members of the family, we've seen her being admitted into the hospital as other people have been, through the emergency department, with no bed and having to sleep on a stretcher in emergency or in the hall for a period of three or four days. The hospitals make great strides to try to alleviate those kinds of conditions for people, but it still speaks to the shortage of long-term-care beds we have. We are still calling on this government to do something in order to respond to what is a crisis in long-term-care beds in the city of Timmins.

The other thing I want to speak to is the municipal infrastructure, and my good friend Mr. Miller raised this earlier. That is, the need to support our communities with the money they need in order to do the things they've got to do: fix the potholes, fix the roof on the arena, make sure that the windows and doors on our municipal buildings are in good repair and that water and sewer are fixed to the degree that they need to be, to be safe and to supply the services that people need.

Listen, there's been a huge downloading exercise, started by the Conservatives and somewhat precipitated by the Liberal government in the last term, that has left municipalities in a really tough spot. They're having to pay for things they never had to pay before. They're having to pay for things like welfare, where they didn't have to pay before to the same degree. A number of other services have been downloaded—some of the court services etc. That means that municipalities have to take money they used to use to fix the potholes in order to keep the courtroom open for provincial offences or to make sure that they have money at the DSSAB when it comes to soft services such as housing or social services such as welfare. That means that potholes get bigger, that municipal buildings fall into greater disrepair, and as time goes by, it's going to cost us way more money than



we would have to pay now, because costs will be more in the years to come.

The government tried to do the right thing. Prior to the budget, they announced that they were possibly going to have a surplus, and if there was a surplus, there was legislation coming that was going to guarantee that everything above \$800 million, I believe, would be given to municipalities to fix their infrastructure problem. What a big fanfare. It was like a press conference that municipalities took seriously and said, "Oh, this is going to be great." Then the government comes in, fully knowing they're not going have a surplus. They come in with a surplus of \$600,000 rather than \$800,000, so there was no money in that fund to assist municipalities.

Then, to make matters worse, the government announced what could have been a good program: roads and bridges funding that applies to cities outside the city of Toronto, some \$300 million—I forget the exact number. Was it \$300 million or \$400 million?

**Interjection:** It was \$400 million.

**Mr. Gilles Bisson:** That's a good thing.

**Mr. Bruce Crozier:** It was \$450 million.

**Mr. Gilles Bisson:** I don't argue for a second that \$450 million is a bad thing. That goes a long way with a lot of municipalities. I accept and support the premise that it's on a formula basis; so much for each community, based on the population of the community and their needs. But I want to put this caveat. One is you need to make sure that it's not just population, but also the needs of the community. The town of Hearst, as a good example, has spent a lot of money to maintain their infrastructure, and they're being penalized in the MIII funding that we just had now. They're not getting the money they applied for, because they're seen as a community that's not as needy. We need to have a formula that makes sure that all municipalities are treated fairly.

But the other thing is that we have to annualize this funding. If I'm the mayor of the town of Hearst, Smooth Rock, Kapuskasing, Timmins or whatever, I need to know that I'm going to get so many dollars per year over a period of five or 10 years—whatever the amount of time we can commit to—so that you can do some planning. For example, if the town of Hearst knew it was going to get \$125,000 a year for infrastructure from this fund—in one year you can't do a heck of a lot with \$125,000; you might fix a couple of sidewalks, a few streets. You probably couldn't even do a whole city block. But if you knew you had this funding over a period of time, say five or 10 years, you could then amortize—I can't say that right. You could put it on time, amortize—do you ever get that sometimes, where the word just doesn't want to come out?

The point is, the municipality would be able to plan, and they could say, "Okay, over a period of five years, we know we're getting \$125,000. That equals X amount of dollars at the end of five years," which would be \$625,000—a little bit of quick math. To boot, the municipality would be able to put up their share and say, "All right, what can we do in our community that's worth,

let's say, \$1 million?" You get the point: They're better able to plan. The money for the community of Hearst might be more than \$125,000, but I'm just using that as an example. So, I say to the government across the way, we could have at least done this initiative on an annualized basis and not just made it a one-time sort of slush fund at the end of the year.

I end on this point, because I've only got a minute, and unfortunately I'm not going to have enough time to get all of it in: I was really looking forward to the government, or Mr. Mauro, coming forward with a bill that would support what we, as New Democrats, put forward, which was the Buy Ontario bill that basically said money that's spent for transit in Ontario, that comes from the province to build buses and streetcars and subways—50% of the construction of those products and materials has to be in Ontario. On behalf of New Democrats, we brought forward such a bill in this Legislature. Unfortunately, it was defeated. I was looking forward to the member from Thunder Bay—Atikokan having his bill come forward this Thursday, which calls for 60%, which I would have supported, because at the end of the day we've got to do what's right for the people of Thunder Bay. Unfortunately, he has decided not to call that bill and traded off his spot. Now we're waiting for the government to take action on probably what's going to be 25%, which is far short of what the Canadian Manufacturers' Association is calling for.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott):** Questions and comments?

**Ms. Helena Jaczek:** I'm very pleased to join this debate on the budget.

When I read the budget last week, I felt it was extremely well balanced, a very prudent budget. I represent the good people of Oak Ridges—Markham, so of course I've spent the last week trying to find out how my constituents feel about this budget. I can tell you, Mr. Speaker and members of this House, that I am simply getting the most positive response possible from the mayors and councillors of the four municipalities I represent, and many others, actually, in the whole region of York. They're simply delighted with our government's recognition of the growth in our region.

I've been interviewed by many reporters from both the local newspapers and the local cable, and they have asked for my opinion, but I've been turning the tables on them and asking for their opinion. I must say that in rural areas in my riding, I'm getting responses like, "a very responsible budget," "no surprises," and the understanding that we're addressing the economic downturn that we see.

One of the endorsements I was most pleased to hear was that of the Richmond Hill Chamber of Commerce. The CEO, Leslie Walker, had this to say: "This budget begins to lay a stronger foundation for a more productive economy with certain targeted measures to improve our infrastructure, strengthen our labour force, and reduce the cost of doing business. These maintenance strategies will help to put Ontario on more solid footing and, we hope,



will pave the way for a more aggressive strategy down the road to assist the sectors hardest hit by the economic slowdown south of the border.”

I'm very pleased about this budget, because it addresses the needs of the people of my riding.

**Mr. Tim Hudak:** I'm pleased to comment on the speeches by the members for Hamilton East–Stoney Creek and Timmins–James Bay. They made some good points and some strong observations about what was missing in the most recent provincial budget, which has gone over with a bit of a thud across Ontario; you don't see much about the budget in the media after the first day.

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There are a few things I want to correct as part of the correcting of the record that's been part of the debate today. The member for Northumberland said that it was the Auditor General who went through the books and had pronounced on the so-called hidden deficit. That's not factual; that's just plain wrong. A consultant was hired and was told to give the worst possible scenario: presume a recession, no savings made, no assets. The Liberals did cook the books in order to come up with that number. The PCs were only in office for about five months of that year; the Liberals were in the rest, and therefore came up with what is actually a fairy tale. I want to make sure the member for Northumberland understands that it wasn't the Auditor General, as he had said.

They also talk about cuts in spending. Program spending under the PC government went up from \$50 billion to \$59 billion in 2002–03. That's about an 18% increase in government spending over its eight-year mandate. When the Bob Rae Liberals were in office, they were often accused of ratcheting up the spending. They did get off to a start of 12.9%—

*Interjection.*

**Mr. Tim Hudak:** Sorry. I should clarify: When Bob Rae was Premier, the last Liberal Premier before Dalton McGuinty, they ratcheted up spending by 12.9% and 12.7% in the first year, and then they actually slowed down spending as the economy went into an even deeper recession. Their total program spending increase was only 15%. Shockingly, the Dalton McGuinty Liberals have increased program spending by some 48% in the first four years alone. That's a record in the province of Ontario in runaway spending.

**Mr. Bruce Crozier:** Since questions and comments are supposed to relate to the speech that was given by the member, I would like to comment specifically about that given by the member for Hamilton East–Stoney Creek. I just want to tell him, when he criticized giving companies like the Ford Motor Co.—investing \$17 million will turn into \$170 million by the Ford Motor Co. I am shocked that the member for Hamilton East–Stoney Creek didn't acknowledge how good that is. I was proud to sit next to Buzz Hargrove when Buzz got up and said that it's this kind of investment that's needed in the auto sector, in the Big Three, at this time in our economy.

*Interjection.*

**Mr. Bruce Crozier:** The member for Hamilton East–Stoney Creek is still objecting to it. Apparently he objects to Buzz Hargrove's comments on it, when I said we were proud to sit next to Buzz Hargrove.

You talked about working with the people of Ontario. Who would have thought, 10 years ago, five years ago, that a Liberal would say who they were proud to sit next to and who they were not? We might not have been sitting there. But do you know what Buzz Hargrove has said? That the Ontario Liberals under Dalton McGuinty have got it; they understand.

So I'm going to say this to the member for Hamilton East–Stoney Creek: I dare you to come down to Windsor, come down to Essex county and say that you think the \$17-million investment in the Ford Motor Co. was a bad deal for those 300 workers who are going to be called back into the plant that is sitting dark today.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott):** Time for one last question or comment.

**Mr. Norm Miller:** It's my pleasure to add some comments to the speeches by the member for Hamilton East–Stoney Creek and the member for Timmins–James Bay. I wasn't here for the entire speech made by the member for Hamilton East–Stoney Creek but I know that he spoke to a certain degree about his private member's bill, which he successfully got before a committee of the Legislature. The subcommittee agreed to have that bill come before it. Really, not much has been going on around this place in terms of legislative action in terms of committees. The committees are not overloaded with work.

I think the government ended up using their majority on the committee to change the will of the subcommittee and not deal with this member's private member's bill. I know that some of the government members, including the member for Huron–Bruce, led that charge to have this bill kicked out of the committee so it wouldn't be dealt with. It just shows that this government is not interested in democracy. There's no reason in the world why this private member's bill should not be dealt with. The government was using a line that this would normally be dealt with by the House leaders. That is not correct. The subcommittee of the Legislature would normally decide what bills they would deal with. I think it very unfortunate. I don't necessarily support the member's bill, but I think it should have at least gotten public hearing and been dealt with, especially when the committee has no work before it, or nothing that's substantial.

In terms of the member—

*Interjection.*

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott):** I ask the member for Huron–Bruce to please come to order.

**Mr. Norm Miller:** I see my time is almost up. I did want to add some comments to do with the member for Timmins–James Bay and the games the government was playing to do with sharing the surplus, which they knew before budget day was not going to meet the threshold, and there's no planned surplus for next year in terms of sharing with municipalities.



**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott):** That concludes the time for questions and comments. I'll return to the member for Hamilton East-Stoney Creek, who has two minutes to reply.

**Mr. Paul Miller:** I must reply to the challenge from the member. I'd be more than happy to go down to his area and talk to those people in that plant because what the government is saying is, "We sunk a lot of money into this, and we've created 300 jobs." Whoopee—300 jobs. With all due respect, 17,000 jobs were lost in Hamilton—300 jobs.

And I'd like to answer the challenge from the member about Buzz Hargrove. Maybe the member over there can refresh my memory. If I remember correctly, Buzz Hargrove supported Paul Martin and all the Liberals, and he was a former NDP member, so they must be doing something really wonderful. However, what he did in that thing was set back the labour unions. Some 20 years that man set us back in the steel sector and all other sectors. Let's look at the Magna deal. Now unions cannot negotiate contracts. The stewards are appointed by the company, but they have the right to work. They can still keep working with no negotiation skills, and that's an advantage to the company. What Mr. Hargrove has done has set us back 20 to 25 years in the labour movement. So if you want to call him your friend and you want to talk with him, I'd be more than happy to negotiate a discussion with you and him. And believe me, you're not going to win this one.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott):** Further debate?

*Interjections.*

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott):** Will the House come to order, please. Will the two members please come to order or chat about this out in the corridor.

Further debate?

**Mrs. Amrit Mangat:** This afternoon I will be sharing my time with the member for Mississauga-Streetsville.

It is with great humility that I stand in this Legislature for my inaugural address on behalf of the constituents of Mississauga-Brampton South. I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate newly and re-elected members in this House on their election wins. Each of us took a different path to get here, but regardless of our political stripes, I believe that all of us have a shared belief in the values of democracy, our service to our community and a common purpose to do the best we can for the people of Ontario.

I immigrated to Canada 16 years ago with the dream of a better life and the goal of building a brighter future for my family. I was born in Jagroan, then a small town in the Indian state of Punjab. My parents were expatriates from what is now known as Pakistan, after India's partition in 1947. They had sought refuge in India, penniless, leaving all their possessions and property behind. They had to work hard to rebuild their life.

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Mr. Speaker, with your indulgence I would like to share a very private story. My father passed away when I was only nine. He was a heart patient and bedridden. My family had to borrow money from my maternal uncles and help from others for his treatment and our family's survival. A few days before his death, when he was aware and he sensed that it was his time to go, he called all members of the family to his bedside and in a very sweet voice he said, "After I leave, always stick together, work hard, pay all family debts and obligations, and be law-abiding citizens." Then he turned to me, then a little girl, and said, "Get lots of education and become a strong woman. It is only through education that families can grow healthier, happier and prosperous." My mother raised me as a single parent with the help of my 13-year-old brother.

With this background, it is with great pride and utter humility that I stand here before this House the product of unity, struggle, hard work, and the vision of my parents, who could not afford a lot, but knew the importance of education if I were to succeed.

I arrived in Canada with two master's degrees and 10 years of experience as an educator. Like many immigrants, I faced several barriers to finding employment and having my qualifications recognized. In spite of the challenges, my family and I continued to hope and persevere, making Canada our home. My first jobs in Canada were working in my husband's office and at a gas station, our family-owned business.

The legacy of the fine values from my parents, my humble beginnings and my experiences are where I gained a passion for serving people. My story is not unique. It is similar to the experience of many families across Ontario, especially Mississauga-Brampton South, an ethnically diverse riding where more than half the constituents are immigrants. It is a story of people facing challenges head-on, with an entrenched belief that, with hope, a better future is ahead.

I stand here today because of volunteers who helped me during my journey to this Legislature, many supporters and concerned citizens who shared this hope and believe that inclusiveness and a sense of common purpose will move our province forward. It is this same hope that motivated me to run as a member of provincial Parliament in order to fight for better health care, a better education system, a strong economy and a prosperous Ontario.

This hope says that there should be no lack in our society and that, by working together, we can conquer poverty. This hope says that it is not okay for us to give up on our future, our children, or allow them to give up on themselves.

I stand here not for myself, but for the young people in my riding who believe in a better future. I stand here for the seniors whose sacrifices have made this province one of the best places in the world to live. I stand here for those who believe in a strong economy and a healthy and greener environment. I stand here for the foreign-trained



professionals who hope to use their education and skills to be a blessing to this province. I stand here for those who believe in an inclusive society that respects and celebrates difference.

The people of Mississauga-Brampton South have given me the privilege to serve them with a great responsibility. They have chosen me to advocate for our local school boards, such as the Peel board of education and the Dufferin-Peel Catholic schools, both of which have their headquarters in my riding. They have sent me here to ensure that the Peel Memorial site remains a part of the foundation of health care in Brampton and to ensure that Credit Valley Hospital, Brampton Civic Hospital and the Trillium Health Centre continue to grow and prosper. They have chosen me to ensure that businesses continue to grow and flourish. They have chosen me to improve public transportation and help solve gridlock. They have chosen me to help decrease poverty in Ontario and ensure that students at post-secondary institutions like the Sheridan Institute of Technology get the best possible education at a price they can afford. They have chosen me to ensure that our government continues to build and nurture partnerships with businesses, municipalities, unions and the federal government.

I wouldn't be here if it was not for many key individuals, supporters and my family members. I thank all of them for their contribution and look forward to their continued friendship and support as we move our province forward. As well, I would like to especially recognize and thank my husband, Jaswant Mangat, who is in the members' gallery today. I'm truly blessed to have such a wonderful husband whose advice, support, love, dedication and ongoing encouragement have been invaluable to me. Thank you, Mr. Mangat.

I'm very proud to be part of a government that has set forth a vision that addresses the aspirations of the people in my riding. The 2008 budget is an investment in this vision and in Ontario's future. I look forward to implementing this vision with my fellow colleagues in the Legislature, with the local representatives in Brampton and Mississauga, and with the citizens of Mississauga-Brampton South.

To the residents of Mississauga-Brampton South, I'm truly thankful for the confidence that you have entrusted in me to make our community and our province a better place in which to live. Please be assured that I take the responsibility that you have given to me seriously, and I will work hard to represent your interests here at Queen's Park.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, with humility and pride, I say in the memory of my parents, "This day belongs to you and your sacrifices." Thank you very much.

*Applause.*

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott):** Thank you very much. I recognize the member for Mississauga-Streetsville.

**Mr. Bob Delaney:** I join with my fellow MPPs in congratulating the member for Mississauga-Brampton South not merely on her election, but certainly on her

very moving inaugural remarks to the province of Ontario.

I'm pleased to add a final Mississauga voice to today's debate on the government's 2008-09 budget. The city of Mississauga is home to nearly 700,000 people. We are about 15% larger than Manitoba's capital city of Winnipeg. In Ontario, only Ottawa and Toronto are larger cities than the city of Mississauga.

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Mississauga is an economic unit larger than the province of New Brunswick, both in population and economic output. Roughly one in nine of Canada's Fortune 500 firms makes Mississauga its head office city.

The city of Mississauga grows by some 20,000 people each year and, in fact, in decades past, our city has built such great neighbourhoods as Streetsville, Erin Mills, Meadowvale, Lisgar and Churchill Meadows to welcome our newcomers and enable them to build homes, families, businesses and communities.

When Churchill Meadows, Mississauga's last large greenfield development, is finished within the next few years, Mississauga will be fully built out. Our expansion then will be through what is called brownfield redevelopment. In our city, this means taking land once used for things like industrial purposes and rezoning and redeveloping it for other purposes.

Additionally, Mississauga is going up in the air. Our city centre neighbourhood is increasingly comprised of high-rise developments. If the streets were narrower and the buildings were twice as tall, it could easily be mistaken for a Hong Kong residential neighbourhood.

Ours is a dynamic and growing city, and its infrastructure needs are similarly critical. That is why our government is carefully and prudently investing Ontario's funds in infrastructure in the city of Mississauga. Infrastructure means that firms that choose Mississauga need ways to get their people from where they live to where their employer is located. That is why Ontario has invested \$65 million in the Mississauga Transitway, to cut commute times.

That's \$65 million that Mississauga has had in its bank account for the past two years. It's cash delivered, not an IOU like the federal government pledges. Not a dime of Ottawa's contribution to the Mississauga Transitway has actually shown up in Mississauga. That's one solid reason why Mississauga-Streetsville will soon be represented once again by a federal Liberal, Bonnie Crombie, who lives in Mississauga, not a Tory carpet-bagger who commutes to photo ops every now and then.

Transit infrastructure also means devoting two cents per litre from the gas tax to Mississauga Transit. That two cents can be used for operating expenses, not just capital expenses. Moreover, Ontario's new bill to invest in Ontario allows some of the budget surplus after the end of the fiscal year to be used for municipal infrastructure projects. Just last week, one such grant enabled Mississauga to build a new training centre for firefighters.



To my opposition colleagues, such an investment is, and I'll use the member's words, "Shovelling it out the door." To the citizens of Mississauga, such projects as the Mississauga Transitway and the new firefighter training centre represent essential infrastructure that is far more important than a tax cut that may amount to saving a penny or two on your cup of coffee at Tim Hortons.

Investing in Ontario prudently means allocating funds for Mississauga's capital projects without last-minute, end-of-the-year pressure to evaluate projects or estimate the exact surplus. Ontario has moved swiftly and decisively to address expenses dumped by the former Conservative government onto municipal taxpayers in cities like Mississauga and Brampton.

The Ontario drug plan and the Ontario disability support payments plan have both been uploaded to the provincial tax base where they belong, not on the municipal tax base. That's the sensible thing to do, and Ontario can't upload those expenses with a tax cut.

Another thing Ontario can't do with a tax cut is eliminate the much-hated GTA pooling, in which tax funds are siphoned from cities like Mississauga and Brampton—some \$65 million last year—and sent to the city of Toronto without accountability, which then is able to tax its citizens at an artificial rate lower than in the 905 belt, because the 905 communities subsidize low Toronto taxes with their much higher property taxes.

Our budgets last year and this year started and continue with this phase-out of GTA pooling, and we can't do it right for our cities east and north and west of Toronto with a tax cut. In contrast to the hidden deficit of some \$5.6 billion that Ontario's former Auditor General reported before our government was even sworn in in October 2003, our budget has been balanced for three years.

We need infrastructure funding to build what the Move Ontario plan calls "capacity expansion" on the Milton GO line. At present, we have six trains Toronto-bound in the morning, the last one leaving Meadowvale at 8:07. At the other end of the day, the first train out of Toronto Union westward is at 4:30, and the last one leaves at 7 pm. We need much more. All of those trains are filled to capacity, and with the new locomotives and the new 12-car trains, they'll still be filled to capacity—every train, every day. We need much more, but for most of the past 60 years the Milton line has had just two tracks. Its owner, CP Rail, uses those two tracks at full capacity. The only way for GO Transit, a tenant on CP's line, to run more trains is to build more capacity, which means a third track, and to partner with the line's owner, CP Rail, to make the pie larger to be able to run all-day train service to and from the western GTA, in areas like Mississauga.

What does that mean to Mississauga? Ours is a city with a daily labour shortage of some 50,000 people. We have to help 50,000 people each day get into Mississauga to work and to support their families, and we can't build the capacity to get those people into Mississauga with a tax cut.

This month, Credit Valley Hospital breaks ground on phase two, a project begun on this government's watch and a project that will be completed on this government's second mandate. Phase two is going to greatly expand our hospital, by some 140 beds. It'll immensely increase our capacity to deal with our seniors through expansion in complex continuing care. We will greatly expand our overcrowded maternity suite, which currently handles more than 5,400 births each year in a facility designed for only 2,700 births per year. We can't build phase two with a tax cut.

Nor can we build the ambulatory surgery centre that the western GTA desperately needs to meet this government's wait time reduction strategy with a tax cut. That will be a facility that will enable some four fifths of surgical procedures, if approved, to be moved outside the hospital into a facility that will enable our surgeons to operate at something close to their capacity and help alleviate the wait times that simply cannot come down any other way.

The 2008-09 government budget is a budget that western Mississauga and all Ontarians need badly and need now. The things that drive our communities, that move Ontario forward, the infrastructure that our cities need to progress in the 21st century, can't be built by cutting taxes to a level that amounts to a penny or two on your cup of coffee at Tim Hortons.

This is a budget that Ontario badly needs. Let's pass this budget. Let's keep Ontario moving forward.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott):** Questions and comments?

**Mr. Tim Hudak:** I'm pleased to comment on the speeches by the member for Mississauga-Brampton South and the member for Mississauga-Streetsville, particularly the member for Mississauga-Brampton South. I congratulate her on her remarks: very touching, with her husband here in the gallery as well, who should be very proud of his wife's accomplishments in being here in the Legislature. It was certainly a very touching story about her father and the kind of motivation he gave to her that resulted in a lot of success in being here in the Ontario Legislature.

I can understand that from my own family's background as well—now second generation, but my grandparents had come from some similar challenges as new immigrants to this country not too long ago. I know they were very proud when they saw that a grandson had the chance to serve as a member of the Ontario Legislature. So I can understand where my colleague is coming from, and I congratulate her. No doubt her father would be very proud as well of her accomplishments in being here today.

1730

One thing I had hoped I'd hear more of, and maybe we will later in the debate, from the government members who are asking us to vote for their budget holus-bolus is the very concerning growth in the \$100,000 club. This is the number of government workers who are making more than \$100,000. I described it in question period today.



That growth under the McGuinty government has been simply gargantuan: a 110% increase in the number of government workers making more than \$100,000. I do hope that maybe, behind the scenes, some of the Liberal members here today are going after the finance minister or the ministers and saying that this is extraordinary growth in these, certainly not front-line, workers. Not too many nurses or teachers or personal support workers in long-term-care facilities are on that list, but a lot of high-priced spin doctors are. So I do hope I'll see some of my colleagues raising these issues in the House and asking the ministers to curtail the runaway growth in the \$100,000 club.

**Hon. Leona Dombrowsky:** On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I would like to ask for unanimous consent for the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing to replace the Premier in the late show that is to occur this evening.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnett):** The Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs has sought unanimous consent of the House to allow the Minister of Municipal Affairs to replace the Premier during the late show this evening. Agreed? Agreed.

Questions and comments. The member for Timmins-James Bay.

**Mr. Gilles Bisson:** I was leaning over and talking to my colleague.

I just want to, as well, congratulate the member. I didn't realize this was her maiden speech. Unfortunately, we haven't had as much House time since the last election—three weeks last fall, and I think we're into our second or third week this spring—so obviously, it's hard to get on the agenda. I would congratulate her.

I agree with her on the comments she made. People come to this place from different experiences. Some of us come out of a business background, others a labour background, a law background, whatever it might be, but that's the beauty of the Legislature. That's the beauty of elections. Imagine a Legislature that was just made up of lawyers. It would be absolutely great for lawyers, but it wouldn't be very good, I think, for a whole bunch of other people. Imagine a Legislature that's only made up of people like my good friend Mr. Crozier. Oh Lord, that would be just unacceptable. All of them coming in with bow ties. The place would just go absolutely wonk.

What makes this Legislature just a great place is that all of us come from different backgrounds. We have different perspectives on often the same points as far as legislation we're debating, and we bring what is, I believe, the important thing, which is a reflection of what we should see in the province of Ontario. We have people from nursing backgrounds; teaching backgrounds; people out of the trade/labour movement—I'm an electrician by trade—lawyers. I think that makes for a good mix.

So I want to congratulate the member and say that I agree with her on that point. This will probably not be the last time I'm nice to her, but I just want her to know that I'm nicer than normal because this is her maiden speech and we always should be respectful of that.

I look forward to the continued work that we're going to have over the next three and a half years. I look forward to her support on many important issues that we find important as New Democrats who may have a different point of view of this government on many issues.

**Mrs. Maria Van Bommel:** I also want to add my congratulations to the member from Mississauga-Brampton South. I think her inaugural speech was very inspiring. It reminds us all of why we're here and the fact that, in our hearts, we really are not partisan. We are here to help our own constituents and to help the residents and citizens of Ontario and the citizens of Canada.

I also rise to talk about the reaction in my riding of Lambton-Kent-Middlesex to the budget. To a great extent, there was a very positive response to the skills-to-jobs action plan and our second-career strategy.

In my riding of Lambton-Kent-Middlesex, which is very rural, the agriculture and the manufacturing aspects kind of interchange in terms of their economic contribution to the riding. We have had, over the years, a strong auto parts manufacturing environment. Over the last few years, that has had its evolution, as is happening right across the province, and we are seeing a change in the types of jobs. We have people now who arrive and find that they have no job. It's very difficult for them when they go home and have to tell their families that the job is finished.

Certainly when they do that in a riding like mine, where we have a very strong work ethic—and I think that comes, as the member from Mississauga-Brampton South talks about the work ethic that her family instilled in her—in my communities in my riding, there is definitely a strong work ethic.

This plan allows them to rebuild their self-esteem; it allows them to have hope again, a purpose in getting up in the morning; and it restores their confidence and their self-respect. I'm very proud of this budget.

**Mr. Randy Hillier:** I'd like to once again, with everybody else, congratulate the member on her maiden speech today. Like her, I had my maiden speech just a short while ago. But I think I'd like to address my comments to this debate on the budget and what I've been hearing on the other side of the House.

One of the things that I've really seen in my time here—it amazes me—is how the members opposite can, with a straight face, stand up and speak out of both sides of their mouths on this debate. One of the things that has been a recurring theme is this shovelling of money out the door without regard to objectives. It's cutting a cheque and nothing more.

I had a community forum a little while ago in my riding where I had about 70 families who have children with intellectual disabilities. Out of those families, the hardship and the stories were very compelling. But one of the things that illustrates this is, we hired many people to find out what the problems are with these people. We have a planning and pressures committee. They identified 634 people who needed help in one area; 235 of them needed homes. But when it came to budget time, all the



pressures and priorities and all the planning was thrown out the window, and this government did per capita funding for people with intellectual disabilities. There was no regard for all the work that went into finding out who needed what help, whether they needed homes or whether they needed respite care. There was total disregard, and those people are suffering because of it.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott):** That concludes the time for questions and comments. One of the government members has two minutes to reply.

I return to the member for Mississauga–Streetsville.

**Mr. Bob Delaney:** I'd like to acknowledge the comments of the members from Niagara West–Glanbrook, Timmins–James Bay, Lambton–Kent–Middlesex and Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox–Addington.

To the member for Niagara West–Glanbrook, if the \$100,000-a-year club had been inflation-adjusted, its numbers this year would have actually shrunk. However, I do want to thank you for your very generous comments on the inaugural speech of the member for Mississauga–Brampton South.

To the member for Timmins–James Bay, I certainly applaud your comments to the member for Mississauga–Brampton South and her unique background. I say to you, sir, across the floor and across party lines, that we are similarly enriched by having at least one electrician representing the people of Ontario.

To the member for Lambton–Kent–Middlesex, who points out accurately that the budget works for cities and for the rural areas of Ontario as well. It's a good budget for students. It helps students with a grant for textbooks and for technology, the computer that you now need for all intents and purposes to pursue any type of post-secondary education at all. It's a good budget for families. It's a good budget for the unemployed in some of the help it gives them for retraining. It is especially a good budget for seniors. Across Ontario, to use the member's words exactly, "It helps people to rebuild their self-esteem."

Finally, to the member for Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington, I'd like to join with the members here in congratulating him on his maiden speech. We listened carefully to his maiden speech, to the direction he came from and to the things he brings to this House. I disagree entirely with his suggestions that he made with regard to our investing-in-cities program, but this is the time to be magnanimous and on behalf of the government members to say welcome to the Ontario Legislature.

1740

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott):** Further debate?

**Mr. Toby Barrett:** I certainly appreciate the opportunity to be part of this budget motion debate. I'd like to kick off by highlighting the fact that our great province of Ontario is blessed with very smart, hard-working people—as we see with respect to the newly elected MPP for Mississauga–Brampton South—a province with tremendous resources, not only in the north but right across this great province, and an unbeatable location. I will say

that's also reflected in the inaugural speech that we just heard this afternoon from the member for Mississauga–Brampton South as she described her voyage from the Punjab to Ontario. Clearly Ontario should be leading Canada, given the natural resources, both human and otherwise, that we possess. We did lead Canada; regrettably now we are trailing Canada. Ontario is now losing ground to nearly every province across the Dominion of Canada. In a sense, we are observing what could be described as a riches-to-rags story.

True to form, we are now debating the fifth budget of this provincial government, and it's a budget that represents no change in policy. I regret to report that this government is staying the course, if you will, and spelling another year of decline for Ontario's economy. The McGuinty approach to government finances and the economy remains tax-and-spend, staying the course with respect to taxing and spending. In Ontario, we now have some of the highest taxes in the country, and spending, as we all know, is up almost 40% since 2003. And in this last fiscal year we have seen an unexpected revenue increase of \$4.9 billion.

One way that I like to put this budget, this planning document, in perspective is to take a look at what's going on south of the border. The American economy is teetering. They are using the R word. They are flirting with a subprime-mortgage-lending recession. I will mention as well that even in Ontario now people are using that R word, and I really find that quite regrettable. In the United States we've seen a recent bank collapse. Many of us recall the stories of bank collapses in the 1930s. Bear Stearns, the fifth largest US investment bank, is essentially out of business. Given some of these dire indications from our largest trading partner, one would have thought that the Premier would have been at least making some contingency plans in this budget, at minimum heeding some of the warnings that would have made use of this budget plan for some possible future. Such is not the case.

Locally, in my neck of the woods, in Haldimand and Norfolk, we are very concerned at the direction of this government with respect to issues financial. The issues in my counties of Norfolk and Haldimand are essentially the same as they were a year ago, essentially the same as two years ago, for that matter. As I indicated this afternoon, Norfolk county is in need of a cash infusion to help with an emerald ash borer invasion. Our forests, which represent 30% of the land mass in Norfolk county, will yet again be subjected to the gypsy moth, as will Haldimand county, Six Nations, and areas throughout the Niagara region. Tim Hudak has been doing a lot of work on that as well.

Also in Norfolk, we have an ongoing tobacco crisis. I understand that there was a meeting in Ottawa yesterday. I trust there was provincial representation at this Ottawa tobacco meeting. I have not heard the results of the deliberations in Ottawa. We can only hope that assistance is forthcoming for our beleaguered tobacco farmers.



It goes without saying that Haldimand is a beleaguered county that has been brought to its knees with respect to the land dispute—we have now passed the two-year anniversary—an issue that has yet to be addressed by this government in any meaningful way.

I stood in the House this afternoon to get the attention of the Minister of Natural Resources and to ask her to address the needs for funding to mitigate the devastation that we are seeing in our trees, our forests. We certainly have seen the gypsy moth devastation for three summers now and, regrettably, we are going to see a total devastation of our ash forest. I know in my bush—25% ash—for as long as I can remember, I have been cutting out dead elm. My father, certainly my grandfather, unfortunately had to cut chestnut out of the bush, given the total destruction of our chestnut species in the 1920s. Stay tuned: Virtually every ash tree in the province of Ontario will be dead by the time this infestation runs its course.

What is sad in a way is that this year Norfolk county received the honour of the title of Canada's forest capital. Yet those very same forests are now at risk due to inaction, I would suggest, by both levels of government and certainly a lack of support in the financial end of things from this particular government. Instead of stepping up with funding to help mitigate this devastation, the impact on our trees, this government has provided nothing in the wake of the budget. It also came to be known that the Ministry of Natural Resources budget had been slashed by \$20 million in this present round. I find that really passing strange, given the \$4.9-billion unexpected revenue that accrued in the past year. Out of \$4.9 billion, I would think that a government and a Minister of Natural Resources would be able to come up with \$20 million to balance the books for her particular ministry.

Norfolk county has suffered a meltdown in its tobacco market. That has a direct impact on the Main Streets—I think of Delhi, I think of Courtland and I think of Tillsonburg, on the border of Norfolk—and it has obviously put a lot of pressure on that tax revenue that always came forward from the farm community, money needed for water and sewer, money needed to accommodate new development. The McGuinty government policy clearly helped force this meltdown in the tobacco market. This is a government that declared war on tobacco, and therefore, when one declares war, one realizes there is always collateral damage and there is also a requirement, if you will, for reparations to be paid as a result of any repercussions from eliminating a market for this particular commodity. Again, this budget has left farmers out in the cold and has left their families out in the cold.

I did mention the land dispute situation not only in Caledonia, but in Haldimand county and up and down what is described as the former Haldimand tract. This is unconscionable, and I find, despite their best efforts to convince the Ontario government that long-awaited support for the impact of this land dispute is needed—and it is needed immediately—people, businesses and the

municipalities in Haldimand county have walked away from this 2008 budget with little more than scraps on their plate.

1750

I was just speaking with a Haldimand county councillor. He indicated that he has received zero dollars for the water and sewer system request for the town of Hagersville. Citizens have testified at pre-budget hearings, the county submitted a recovery plan to this provincial government and residents have come to Queen's Park; again, no mention in the budget. No mention of Caledonia; I guess that's the C-word for this particular government. However, we have seen a meagre offering, through roads and bridges, in their year-end spending.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott):** Thank you.

On March 25, 2008, Mr. Duncan moved, seconded by Mr. McGuinty, that this House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour of the motion will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Pursuant to the agreement earlier today, this vote is deferred until tomorrow during deferred votes.

*Vote deferred.*

## ADJOURNMENT DEBATE

### AFFORDABLE HOUSING

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Pursuant to standing order 37, the question that this House do now adjourn is deemed to have been put.

The member for Parkdale–High Park has given notice of her dissatisfaction with an answer to a question given to the Premier. The House has given consent to allow the Minister of Municipal Affairs to respond on behalf of the Premier. The member has up to five minutes to debate the matter, and the minister may reply for up to five minutes.

**Ms. Cheri DiNovo:** Just to give a little background, what I'm disputing is the Premier's answer when he stated that 18,000 units of affordable housing are currently being built. But to set the backdrop to this, we've also heard this week in the House that \$100 million of the new budget has gone to new affordable housing, which is absolutely incorrect. The \$100 million has gone to the repair of existing affordable housing, and it's for the entire province, whereas Save Our Structures specifically requested of this government that \$300 million go for the repair of affordable housing held by the government in the GTA alone. So it doesn't fulfill their request. It certainly is not money for new affordable housing units. By the way, again a form of correction: In our campaign, we promised \$30 million a year for the



repair of existing structures and 7,000 new units of affordable housing to be built every year.

Again, a little bit of background to this: In February of last year, we submitted a freedom of information request to discover how many actual units of affordable housing this government has provided. The answer came back: 285. Let's define what affordable housing is, because that's where they're going to obfuscate. Affordable housing, for those on minimum wage, on OW or ODSP, is 30% of their income. That means affordable housing has to rent at \$500 or less per month. We knew last February that they provided 285. So it's passing strange that somehow, instantly, we've got 18,000 being built as we speak. That's one of the backdrops to this.

Another backdrop, of course, is the federal dollars that have been left on the table, which are not being spent. I look at the Star editorial on Sunday. They point out that there are two federal trust funds: one, with \$80 million, to build desperately needed off-reserve aboriginal housing, and the other, with about \$85 million, to provide \$100-a-month rent supplements, neither of which has been spent. There's a time limit on this. The time limit is March 2009. So again, backdrop: There are 170,000 households—not individuals, households—on the waiting list for affordable housing, and the average wait is eight to 10 years.

This is a crisis. I'm not here, and I'm not keeping the honourable member across from me here, out of anything petty. This is serious. We have one in five children living in poverty in the province of Ontario. We have 170,000 households waiting for affordable housing, and we see no money in the new budget for new affordable housing units—no money. We see that they still haven't even come remotely close to their original promise back in 2003 of 20,000 units.

Now, when the Premier promises that we are actually building 18,000 units of affordable housing, I want to know a few things. I want to know this: Where are the 18,000 units of affordable housing? What will they rent for? When will they be ready?

I'd also like to ask a personal question. Green Phoenix in South Parkdale, which has been lobbying this government for money ever since I've been in this House, has not received anything—has received federal dollars, has received municipal dollars, but the province is missing in action. Where is the money for Green Phoenix? Most of the units are already built. They just need a top-up, and this government can't even come up with money for the Green Phoenix development, which everyone universally has said is a good project and should get the green light, should go ahead.

Finally, I want to know where these so-called 18,000 units are. Where are they, what will they rent for and when will they be ready? I'll be the first one there for the ribbon-cutting.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott):** I recognize the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

**Hon. Jim Watson:** I want to thank the honourable member opposite for coming to the Legislature to talk

about housing. This is my first adjournment debate, so I'm very delighted to be here.

I know a couple of days ago the honourable member called our \$100-million investment in affordable housing "meagre," but I was expecting at least an acknowledgment of the progress this government has made on the housing file to date. I want to start with that \$100-million investment that we're very proud of. While the member may call this "meagre," housing advocates are recognizing the significance of this investment. Let me quote two people.

Sharad Kerur, who is the executive director of the Ontario Non-Profit Housing Association, said, "While no one government can solve decades of issues affecting the current state and need for more affordable housing, this government is leading the way in finding solutions to improve affordable housing in Ontario. [This] announcement will make a real difference and demonstrates that the government has been listening to ONPHA's concerns."

Michael Shapcott from the Wellesley Institute said, "The \$100 million that the Ontario government will be sending to municipal service managers to repair rundown social housing is a smart and sensible investment and a good down payment on a long-overdue concern. It makes more sense to invest in improving the existing homes than to wait until they fall apart, then spend even bigger dollars to replace them. Municipalities were stuck with a huge unfunded liability for repairs in social housing when the Ontario government downloaded the cost and administration of housing to local governments starting in 1998. Investing in improving the province's affordable homes is a good first step."

It's not just the big housing gurus who appreciate what we're doing. Just today, Dan Best, director of community services for the county of Dufferin, said that the \$261,000 in provincial capital funding is "welcome funding." He went on to say, "It's a good start for the province to start reinvesting in some of the downloaded services, such as social housing."

I want the member to know about a recent announcement my colleague Jeff Leal made in Peterborough last week. The announcement recognized four affordable housing projects in Peterborough funded by the Canada-Ontario affordable housing program, totalling \$9 million in capital costs, including an 11-unit conversion project, now officially open, and a 48-unit project now under construction; the \$5.5-million project will be occupied by low-income residents, some with special needs.

Since the member across the way is from Toronto, I wanted to reiterate Toronto's share of the \$100 million. It's over \$36 million this year, and that's significant because her own leader in the last election campaign committed to providing only \$30 million this year. We are providing \$36 million. My math tells me that \$36 million is more than \$30 million.

Now, that's the pattern of the NDP. They don't know how to do anything but call for more money, so even



when they do, they're committed to simply moving the goalpost and calling for more money.

It's important to put our investments in historical context. The McGuinty government is investing, on average, \$111 million per year in capital housing dollars. This past year, we're investing \$189 million. The Tories, in their last year in government, invested only \$7 million. The NDP did better than the Tories, but they invested \$52.5 million. So as members and the public who are watching this late show can see, the NDP's credibility on affordable housing is, number one, paper-thin; and secondly, housing advocates know that deeds speak louder than words, and we're proud of our deeds.

For instance, tomorrow I'm going to Ottawa, to Gatineau, to meet for the first time in two years with the Harper government's housing minister with all of the other provincial and territorial ministers. After two years, we finally received a meeting with Mr. Solberg, and we're going to press Mr. Solberg to recognize that the federal government has to be back at the table. This government, under my predecessor John Gerretsen, signed the affordable housing agreement with the previous, Paul

Martin government. It was a good deal for Ontario—\$301 million that we put on the table.

Housing construction is taking place all throughout the province. We have a very exciting and successful ROOF program; already 14,000 people in the province of Ontario have received \$100 cheques, starting on January 1. The application process for the second round now goes to June 30, and we're excited about the opportunity that we are giving to make housing more affordable for some of the most vulnerable and poorest people in our community.

We have to do more—there's no question about that—but we're proud of the fact that the McGuinty government is back in the affordable housing business. We want the federal government to get back in there, in partnership with us and with municipalities. I look forward to future questions from my critic across the way.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott):** There being no further matter to debate, I deem the motion to adjourn to be carried. This House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 1:30 p.m.

*The House adjourned at 1801.*

**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO**  
**ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO**

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenant-gouverneur: Hon. / L'hon. David C. Onley, O.Ont.

Speaker / Président: Hon. / L'hon. Steve Peters

Clerk / Greffière: Deborah Deller

Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Lisa Freedman, Tonia Grannum

Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Aggelonitis, Sophia (L)	Hamilton Mountain	
Albanese, Laura (L)	York South–Weston / York-Sud–Weston	
<b>Arnott, Ted (PC)</b>	Wellington–Halton Hills	First Deputy Chair of the committee of the whole House / Premier Vice-Président du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Arthurs, Wayne (L)	Pickering–Scarborough East / Pickering–Scarborough-Est	
Bailey, Robert (PC)	Sarnia–Lambton	
Balkissoon, Bas (L)	Scarborough–Rouge River	
Barrett, Toby (PC)	Haldimand–Norfolk	
<b>Bartolucci, Hon. / L'hon. Rick (L)</b>	Sudbury	Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels
<b>Bentley, Hon. / L'hon. Christopher (L)</b>	London West / London-Ouest	Attorney General / procureur general
Berardinetti, Lorenzo (L)	Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough-Sud-Ouest	
<b>Best, Hon. / L'hon. Margaret R. (L)</b>	Scarborough–Guildwood	Minister of Health Promotion / ministre de la Promotion de la santé
Bisson, Gilles (ND)	Timmins–James Bay / Timmins–Baie James	
<b>Bradley, Hon. / L'hon. James J. (L)</b>	St. Catharines	Minister of Transportation / ministre des Transports
Broten, Laurel C. (L)	Etobicoke–Lakeshore	
Brown, Michael A. (L)	Algoma–Manitoulin	
Brownell, Jim (L)	Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry	
<b>Bryant, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (L)</b>	St. Paul's	Minister of Aboriginal Affairs, government House leader / ministre des Affaires autochtones, leader parlementaire du gouvernement
<b>Cansfield, Hon. / L'hon. Donna H. (L)</b>	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	Minister of Natural Resources / ministre des Richesses naturelles
<b>Caplan, Hon. / L'hon. David (L)</b>	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal / ministre du Renouvellement de l'infrastructure publique
<b>Carroll, Hon. / L'hon. M. Aileen (L)</b>	Barrie	Minister of Culture, minister responsible for seniors / ministre de la Culture, ministre déléguée aux Affaires des personnes âgées
<b>Chan, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (L)</b>	Markham–Unionville	Minister of Citizenship and Immigration / ministre des Affaires civiques et de l'Immigration
Chudleigh, Ted (PC)	Halton	
Colle, Mike (L)	Eglinton–Lawrence	
Craitor, Kim (L)	Niagara Falls	
<b>Crozier, Bruce (L)</b>	Essex	Deputy Speaker, Chair of the committee of the whole House / Vice- Président, Président du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Delaney, Bob (L)	Mississauga–Streetsville	
Dhillon, Vic (L)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Dickson, Joe (L)	Ajax–Pickering	
DiNovo, Cheri (ND)	Parkdale–High Park	
<b>Dombrowsky, Hon. / L'hon. Leona (L)</b>	Prince Edward–Hastings	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales
<b>Duguid, Hon. / L'hon. Brad (L)</b>	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	Minister of Labour / ministre du Travail
<b>Duncan, Hon. / L'hon. Dwight (L)</b>	Windsor–Tecumseh	Minister of Finance, Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / ministre des Finances, président du Conseil de gestion du gouvernement
Dunlop, Garfield (PC)	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	
Elliott, Christine (PC)	Whitby–Oshawa	



Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Flynn, Kevin Daniel (L)	Oakville	
<b>Fonseca, Hon. / L'hon. Peter</b> (L)	Mississauga East–Cooksville / Mississauga-Est–Cooksville	Minister of Tourism / ministre du Tourisme
Gélinas, France (ND)	Nickel Belt	
<b>Gerretsen, Hon. / L'hon. John</b> (L)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les Îles	Minister of the Environment / ministre de l'Environnement
<b>Gravelle, Hon. / L'hon. Michael</b> (L)	Thunder Bay–Superior North / Thunder Bay–Superior-Nord	Minister of Northern Development and Mines / ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
Hampton, Howard (ND)	Kenora–Rainy River	Leader of the New Democratic Party / chef du Nouveau Parti démocratique
Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	
Hillier, Randy (PC)	Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington	
<b>Horwath, Andrea</b> (ND)	Hamilton Centre Hamilton-Centre	Third Deputy Chair of the committee of the whole House / Troisième Vice-Présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Hoy, Pat (L)	Chatham–Kent–Essex	
Hudak, Tim (PC)	Niagara West–Glanbrook / Niagara-Ouest–Glanbrook	
Jaczek, Helena (L)	Oak Ridges–Markham	
Jeffrey, Linda (L)	Brampton–Springdale	
Jones, Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin–Caledon	
Klees, Frank (PC)	Newmarket–Aurora	
Kormos, Peter (ND)	Welland	New Democratic Party House leader / leader parlementaire du Nouveau Parti démocratique
Kular, Kuldip (L)	Bramalea–Gore–Malton	
Kwinter, Monte (L)	York Centre / York-Centre	
Lalonde, Jean-Marc (L)	Glengarry–Prescott–Russell	
Leal, Jeff (L)	Peterborough	
Levac, Dave (L)	Brant	
MacLeod, Lisa (PC)	Nepean–Carleton	
Mangat, Amrit (L)	Mississauga–Brampton South / Mississauga–Brampton-Sud	
Marchese, Rosario (ND)	Trinity–Spadina	
Martiniuk, Gerry (PC)	Cambridge	
<b>Matthews, Hon. / L'hon. Deborah</b> (L)	London North Centre / London-Centre-Nord	Minister of Children and Youth Services, minister responsible for women's issues / ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse, ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
Mauro, Bill (L)	Thunder Bay–Atikokan	
<b>McGuinty, Hon. / L'hon. Dalton</b> (L)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	Premier and President of the Council, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / premier ministre et président du Conseil, ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales
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McNeely, Phil (L)	Ottawa–Orléans	
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of Ontario

First Session, 39<sup>th</sup> Parliament

Assemblée législative  
de l'Ontario

Première session, 39<sup>e</sup> législature

# Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

# Journal des débats (Hansard)

Wednesday 2 April 2008

Mercredi 2 avril 2008

Speaker  
Honourable Steve Peters

Président  
L'honorable Steve Peters

Clerk  
Deborah Deller

Greffière  
Deborah Deller



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## LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 2 April 2008

## ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 2 avril 2008

*The House met at 1330.  
Prayers.*

### MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

#### WORLD AUTISM AWARENESS DAY

**Ms. Sylvia Jones:** I am proud to stand to mark April 2 as World Autism Awareness Day. Today is dedicated to increasing the knowledge and understanding of autism, and to share information regarding the importance of early diagnosis and early intervention. Scientists around the world are searching for the causes of autism, which will hopefully lead to a cure. Awareness will increase this spring and summer. On March 25, Jonathan Howard began an eight-month run across Canada to raise \$2.5 million for autism research and treatment.

Contrast these positive, proactive measures with what the McGuinty Liberals have been doing to families with autistic children. Since 2004, the McGuinty Liberals have been fighting with the parents of autistic children over what they consider to be proper education. I heard from a family last month whose daughter was pulled out of the IBI, or intensive behavioural intervention, program when she turned seven. Now, her family is trying to pay for this critically important treatment program from their own funds, because they are unwilling to see their daughter regress without IBI. Another family in my riding is looking to move to Alberta, because they know that IBI is covered by the provincial Tories there.

Instead of supporting these families, the McGuinty Liberals have chosen to fight their efforts by blocking IBI treatment. Rather than empty announcements, when will we see real action from this government on autism?

#### KRAFT HOCKEYVILLE 2008

**Mr. Bruce Crozier:** Last week, I rose to inform the House and the citizens of Ontario that we in the riding of Essex were proud to have Kingsville as one of the five finalists for Kraft Hockeyville Canada. So the voting has started and the five finalists are in.

Scott Oake and Kelly Hruby have visited Kingsville. They've painted a red line down the centre of Kingsville, and today the town crier was saying that Kingsville has to be Hockeyville, Canada.

So I'm asking all my colleagues here at Queen's Park and the folks at home if they will get on their telephones,

get on their computers and vote for Kingsville for Hockeyville. All you have to do is go to [cbc.ca/hockeyville](http://cbc.ca/hockeyville) on your computer, click on "Kingsville," and you can vote as many times as you like until midnight, April 4; or you can call toll-free 1-888-843-5604 until 11 a.m. on April 6. So take up that old tradition of voting early, voting often, for Kingsville for Kraft Hockeyville in Canada.

#### POPE JOHN PAUL II

**Mr. John Yakubski:** As a proud Canadian of Polish descent, I'm honoured to rise today to pay tribute to Pope John Paul II on the third anniversary of his passing. A great son of his native Poland, Karol Wojtyla dedicated his life to his church and people.

A man who gave of himself to help others, he once rescued a Polish Jew who fled from a Nazi death camp. As he was about to leave her, she grabbed his arm and gratefully asked him his name. Thirty-three years later, when a new Pope was elected, she wrote to him to ask, "Are you the man who saved my life?" Pope John Paul then invited her to come to Rome to meet with him.

My brother Mark was also blessed to be granted a private audience with Pope John Paul in December 1983.

John Paul II was also Ontario's Pope and on his visits here was enthusiastically greeted by Canadians of all backgrounds. This is why I ask all members of this House to support private member's Bill 25, An Act to proclaim Pope John Paul II Day in Ontario, which was tabled by my colleague the member for Newmarket-Aurora.

The heart of Pope John Paul II was large enough to embrace the entire world. Today we celebrate the values of compassion, respect and tolerance that were his hallmark and that truly represent the best of what is Canada.

I close with this quote from Pope John Paul himself: "Let us not be overwhelmed by the distress of the present time. Let us instead open our hearts and minds to the great challenges lying before us."

#### WORLD AUTISM AWARENESS DAY

**Ms. Andrea Horwath:** Today is the historic, first-ever United Nations World Autism Awareness Day. I'd like to formally recognize this important day in the Ontario Legislature and acknowledge the efforts of families with children with autism who are fighting hard



for better services in Ontario. As well, on behalf of New Democrats, I want to commend the diligent and dedicated work being done by the many autism stakeholder groups in communities across this province and Canada.

The situation for children with autism and their families is dire in Ontario, I'm sorry to say. The number of children on waiting lists for IBI therapy was 1,063 as of December 2007, up from 985 in March of that year. Similarly, more children are waiting to be assessed for treatment: 334 children in March, and nine months later, 381.

I would like to thank Sharon Gabison of the Ontario Autism Coalition for the following survey results—a snapshot from families seeking help for children with autism: The average waiting time to access publicly funded IBI/ABA is 17 months—some families have waited anywhere from three to seven years; 82% of respondents noted that there was no ABA in the public school system—parents have to keep their children home from school to provide them with ABA; and over half the families liquidated assets to fund their child's treatment while on the waiting list, spending an average of \$35,000 for minimum hours.

How tragic that on the very first World Autism Awareness Day we see that Ontario is falling further behind, and I put that at the feet of the McGuinty Liberal government, which is failing our children.

#### CORNWALL COMMUNITY HOSPITAL

**Mr. Jim Brownell:** The Cornwall Community Hospital is a cornerstone of the city of Cornwall in my riding of Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry. With more than 1,000 employees, it serves acute-care and community-based patient needs.

Now that the early-works reconstruction projects have been completed and its main redevelopment is soon to begin, courtesy of our government's ReNew Ontario plan and a generous community, this will soon be one of the most state-of-the-art medical facilities anywhere in Ontario.

I am very proud of the support that the McGuinty government and the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care have provided to this health care facility. However, my greatest praise must be saved for the community itself. It was through the generosity of a caring community that the Our Hospital, Our Community campaign team surpassed its goal of \$12 million under the leadership of Tom and Gail Kaneb. The Cornwall Community Hospital is fittingly named, as it is truly the community that makes this hospital great.

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Through the annual CORUS Caring Hearts Radiothon, hosted by Corus Entertainment in Cornwall, the people of Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry have opened, and will continue to open, their hearts and wallets and donate generously. On April 9, I encourage everyone to listen to the radiothon on Variety 104.5, Rock 101.9 and AM1220 in Cornwall. You may even be inspired by the great spirit

of Cornwall and area to call 613-933-7755 or 1-866-966-9991 and make a donation. I congratulate the Corus Entertainment team.

#### VAUGHAN HOSPITAL SERVICES

**Mr. Peter Shurman:** I rise in the Legislature today to speak on the subject of Vaughan hospital services. It is my understanding that the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care is in possession of two letters, one from the Central LHIN board chair, Ken Morrison, and the other from the Vaughan Health Campus of Care foundation chair, Michael DeGasperi. These letters, both dated March 31, were accompanied by the Service Needs Assessment for Identification of Vaughan Hospital Services Needs Final Report. Both these men and their respective teams worked tirelessly together to ensure that this report was transmitted to the minister in a timely fashion, and they came in on deadline.

This report provides irrefutable evidence that the need for a new hospital in Vaughan is immediate and that the planning and construction of such a facility should proceed without delay. Vaughan's population has grown more rapidly than any other community in Ontario, yet it is the only municipality within the top 10 most populous communities in Ontario without a local acute care hospital.

The health care situation in Vaughan is not acceptable. The result has been delays in accessing treatment, increased wait times and more travel for patients, putting more and more people's lives at risk.

Statistics in the needs assessment report show that by 2013, the projected need for total bed-based services in Vaughan will be around 300. By 2030, that number is projected to grow to around 460. Action needs to be taken now. We cannot wait longer.

The report made three recommendations:

(1) The Central LHIN should undertake a broader planning exercise that creates a current and future blueprint for hospital services across the LHIN, which involves the existing health providers in the LHIN. This will provide insight into the impact of future Vaughan hospital service needs on existing health providers and will guide the balancing and coordination of health service delivery across the Central LHIN into the future.

(2) The Central LHIN and the ministry should work with existing—

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Thank you. The member's time has expired.

#### ONTARIO BUDGET

**Mr. Kuldip Kular:** It's a pleasure to rise before my colleagues to talk about the impact of the 2008 Ontario budget on the constituency I represent, Bramalea–Gore–Malton. First, I wish to mention the benefits to manufacturers of this government's proposal to eliminate the capital tax for manufacturers, which makes available hundreds of millions of dollars.

While tax breaks improve the competitiveness of business and industry and are an incentive for economic growth, investment in training programs provides hope to many of my constituents who find themselves in the difficult position of having skills and work experience in a particular industry and, due to economic changes beyond their control, have been laid off. The Second Career strategy allows 20,000 people to retrain for high-paying jobs and proudly re-enter Ontario's competitive workforce.

This budget also takes into consideration young tradespeople by encouraging the expansion of apprenticeship programs through the apprenticeship enhancement fund and, importantly, by encouraging young people to complete their training so that they possess the skills necessary for success in today's competitive age.

In funding training programs, the government is contributing to the success of dedicated and hard-working Ontarians. We are ensuring our prosperity as a province and opportunity for the future of all Ontarians.

#### PARLEMENT JEUNESSE FRANCOPHONE DE L'ONTARIO

**M. Jean-Marc Lalonde:** Il me fait plaisir de souhaiter la bienvenue à 60 élèves provenant des quatre coins de la province. Ces élèves, qui représentent l'école secondaire de leur région respective, participent au Parlement jeunesse francophone de l'Ontario, qui se déroule ici-même à Queen's Park cette semaine.

Les trois objectifs de ce Parlement jeunesse sont de stimuler l'intérêt et l'engagement des élèves francophones envers la politique et le fonctionnement d'un gouvernement; permettre aux élèves de débattre des idées, d'exprimer des opinions et de défendre une position, tout en développant leur capacité de leadership; et de favoriser la construction identitaire et inciter les élèves à s'impliquer dans leur communauté.

Le Parlement jeunesse francophone de l'Ontario est un programme unique en son genre car il implique les jeunes dans le domaine de la politique, du journalisme et des organisations non-gouvernementales.

Je tiens à remercier ma collègue l'honorable Kathleen Wynne, ainsi que les représentants du ministère de l'Éducation qui ont travaillé étroitement à la réalisation de ce projet.

Je souhaite également remercier la FESFO, qui est l'organisme porte-parole de 25 000 jeunes francophones de l'Ontario. L'Ontario a besoin des jeunes énergiques qui souhaitent se dévouer pour leur communauté, et rien n'égale la politique pour ce faire.

#### ONTARIO ECONOMY

**Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn:** As you know, I represent the riding of Oakville, which is the headquarters of Ford of Canada. Yesterday, during debate on the budget, my colleague from Hamilton East-Stoney Creek was talking about our government's recent announcement of its

partnership with Ford in opening the Ford Motor Company's Essex engine plant, and I was outraged by his remarks. Within this partnership, the government is providing \$17 million to support Ford's \$170-million investment in a new engine program in Windsor which will allow about 300 workers to return to their jobs. And do you know what my colleague from Hamilton East-Stoney Creek said? He said, "Whoopee—300 jobs." I don't think the workers who are now able to return to work and support their families because of this investment would share the tone of that remark.

This government has a five-point plan to build a stronger economy in this province, and this key partnership with Ford is an integral part of that plan. We proposed \$355 million over three years for a Second Career strategy that's going to help 20,000 unemployed workers get long-term training for new and better careers.

My colleague across the floor may scoff at what this government is doing for Ontarians, but the fact is, we're taking the appropriate actions; we're making smart investments to ensure a strong and vibrant economy for the people involved in the auto industry and for all workers in the province of Ontario.

#### WEARING OF PINS

**Mr. Dave Levac:** On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I have spoken to the opposition and I understand I do have it, but I will seek unanimous consent. This month, April, is Parkinson's Month. Each of us has received a pin and some tulips commemorating those who are suffering from Parkinson's. In honour of my brother and all of those people who suffer from Parkinson's, I request unanimous consent to wear the pins for the month of April.

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Agreed? Agreed.

#### REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

##### STANDING COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** I beg to inform the House that today the Clerk received the report on intended appointments dated April 2, 2008, of the standing committee on government agencies. Pursuant to standing order 106(e)(9), the report is deemed to be adopted by the House.

*Report deemed adopted.*

#### INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

##### 827291 ONTARIO LTD. ACT, 2008

Mr. Naqvi moved first reading of the following bill:  
Bill Pr7, An Act to revive 827291 Ontario Ltd.



**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

*First reading agreed to.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Pursuant to standing order 84, this bill stands referred to the standing committee on regulations and private bills.

**Mr. Robert W. Runciman:** On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: According to the standing orders, earlier today I delivered a written point of privilege to your office. I am assuming that no further elaboration is required, and I will look forward to your response.

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** I thank the member on his point, and I will be speaking to it just prior to question period.

## DEFERRED VOTES

### 2008 ONTARIO BUDGET

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** We have a deferred vote by Mr. Duncan on the motion that this House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government.

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

*The division bells rang from 1351 to 1356.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** All those in favour of Mr. Duncan's motion will please rise.

#### Ayes

Aggelonitis, Sophia  
Albanese, Laura  
Balkissoon, Bas  
Bartolucci, Rick  
Bentley, Christopher  
Berardinetti, Lorenzo  
Best, Margaret  
Bradley, James J.  
Brotten, Laurel C.  
Brown, Michael A.  
Brownell, Jim  
Bryant, Michael  
Cansfield, Donna H.  
Caplan, David  
Carroll, Aileen  
Chan, Michael  
Colle, Mike  
Craitor, Kim  
Crozier, Bruce  
Delaney, Bob  
Dhillon, Vic

Dickson, Joe  
Dombrowsky, Leona  
Duguid, Brad  
Duncan, Dwight  
Flynn, Kevin Daniel  
Fonseca, Peter  
Gravelle, Michael  
Hoy, Pat  
Jaczek, Helena  
Kular, Kuldip  
Kwinter, Monte  
Lalonde, Jean-Marc  
Leal, Jeff  
Levac, Dave  
Mangat, Amrit  
Matthews, Deborah  
Mauro, Bill  
McGuinty, Dalton  
Milloy, John  
Mitchell, Carol  
Moridi, Reza

Naqvi, Yasir  
Oraziotti, David  
Pendergast, Leeanna  
Phillips, Gerry  
Pupatello, Sandra  
Qaadri, Shafiq  
Ramal, Khalil  
Ramsay, David  
Rinaldi, Lou  
Sandals, Liz  
Sergio, Mario  
Smith, Monique  
Smitherman, George  
Sousa, Charles  
Takhar, Harinder S.  
Van Bommel, Maria  
Wilkinson, John  
Wynne, Kathleen O.  
Zimmer, David

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** All those opposed to the motion will please rise.

#### Nays

Annett, Ted  
Bailey, Robert  
Barrett, Toby  
Bisson, Gilles  
DiNovo, Cheri  
Dunlop, Garfield  
Elliott, Christine  
Gélinas, France  
Hampton, Howard  
Hardeman, Ernie

Horwath, Andrea  
Jones, Sylvia  
Kormos, Peter  
MacLeod, Lisa  
Marchese, Rosario  
Martiniuk, Gerry  
Miller, Norm  
Miller, Paul  
Munro, Julia  
O'Toole, John

Prue, Michael  
Runciman, Robert W.  
Savoline, Joyce  
Scott, Laurie  
Shurman, Peter  
Sterling, Norman W.  
Tabuns, Peter  
Wilson, Jim  
Witmer, Elizabeth  
Yakubski, John

**The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller):** The ayes are 61; the nays are 30.

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** I declare the motion carried.

*Agreed to.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** It is therefore resolved that the House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government.

## VISITORS

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** We have a number of guests visiting the Ontario Legislature today, and I would like to introduce them.

First, in the Speaker's gallery, I would like to introduce some new friends of mine: David Aiello, the CEO of Synergex Corp., and his sons Avie, Josh and Ryan; and an old friend of mine, Kevin Daniels. Welcome to the Speaker's gallery today.

In the west public gallery, we'd like to recognize Mr. Gilles Morin, the former member from Carleton East in the 33rd, 34th, 35th and 36th Parliaments. Welcome back to Queen's Park.

We also would like to welcome a former member, Mr. Gary Malkowski, the member from York East in the 35th Parliament. Gary, welcome.

On behalf of the member from Simcoe North, we would like to welcome, located in the members' west gallery, Cathy Bayles and Rolf Springer from the town of Midland. Welcome to Queen's Park today.

On behalf of the member from Burlington, we'd like to welcome her daughter, Natasha, her son-in-law Joshua and her granddaughter Olivia Flippance, who are present in the gallery today. Welcome.

As well, on behalf of the member from Burlington, the member from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke and the member from Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock, we would like to welcome page Daniel Muzzi's grandparents Don and Elizabeth Hawkins, who drove down from Burlington; as well, page Daniel's other set of grandparents, Bill and Judy Muzzi. They're all in the west gallery today.

You need to tell me who sends these notes sometimes. I appreciate that.

We'd like to welcome to the west gallery today Glenn Coughtrey and Lona Joly. Welcome.

On behalf of the member from Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock, I'd like to welcome Sam, Mike and Anne of the Van Warmerdam family, here to see Jacqui Van Warmerdam, who is page captain today. They are in the east members' gallery. Welcome.

On behalf of a number of members—the Minister of Transportation, the member from Durham, the member from Timmins-James Bay and the member from Thunder Bay-Atikokan—we'd like to remind everyone that today is Marine Day and recognize, in the members' gallery, Mike Kirkpatrick and Angus Armstrong from the Ontario Marine Transportation Forum; Wayne Smith and Michel Drolet, who are in the west members' gallery; and



executive director Peter Landry, who is here at Queen's Park. We commend them for their fine work.

Just also a reminder that there's a reception tonight; I don't often remind members of receptions, but there's a special presentation that's being made to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, and we'd encourage members to be there. Welcome to those who are here for Marine Day.

On behalf of the member from Glengarry–Prescott–Russell, I would like to welcome the pupils who are here from the francophone high schools in Ontario until Friday to participate in the second *Parlement jeunesse* francophone de l'Ontario, a francophone youth model Parliament. They are in the west gallery.

On behalf of the member from Thornhill, welcome to Ms. Elva Murphy.

On behalf of the member from Don Valley West, I'd like to welcome members of the Ontario Principals' Council on their 10th anniversary, in the east members' gallery.

In the east members' gallery as well, on behalf of the member for Kitchener–Waterloo, Mr. Tasos Stathopoulos and Mrs. Maryanne Stathopoulos, who are visiting from Kitchener–Waterloo. Welcome today.

In the east gallery, on behalf of the member for Kitchener–Conestoga, again, members from the principals' council: Lisa Vincent, Mike Benson, Laura Hodgins, Doug Morrell, Ami Trefler and Helmut Tinnes. Welcome today.

On behalf of the member for Trinity–Spadina, in the east gallery, Oscar Sperling and Delia Keller, two economists from the finance ministry of Argentina.

On behalf of the member for Oxford, we welcome the grade 10 class of Mr. Andy Loebus from St. Mary's High School in Woodstock, in the east gallery.

For anyone who was not recognized today, on behalf of the members of the Legislature, I would like to welcome everyone to Queen's Park today.

#### MEMBER'S PRIVILEGE

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Earlier today, the leader of the official opposition filed written notice with me of his wish to raise a point of privilege, as required by standing order 21(c). I would like to thank the member for giving me sufficient time to review the matter.

The member's point of privilege is related to his contention that the government is preparing to introduce a tax that was not mentioned in the recent budget; specifically, a tax on tires.

I wish to advise that I will be deciding on this matter without further hearing directly from the member at this time, as standing order 21(d) permits me to do.

I have carefully reviewed the member's written submission and cannot find that he has made out a *prima facie* case of privilege.

The member's written submission refers to the privilege that members enjoy of attending in this chamber and participating in various ways to hold the government accountable for its decisions and its actions.

I cannot see that the ability of any member to perform such parliamentary functions is detracted from in the present case. What we have largely amounts to a disagreement, on the part of the member, with a potential policy direction that the government may choose to follow, or perhaps with the process surrounding the development of this potential policy.

To take the member's perspective, he does in fact have considerable ability to hold the government to account on this matter, perhaps most directly and explicitly through the daily oral question period. This is precisely what he did with the two questions in yesterday's question period. I think that is a clear indication that nothing about which he has raised a grievance has affected his very ability to raise this grievance in the first place. He has not been obstructed or hindered in that responsibility as leader of the official opposition.

To reiterate, I do not find that the member has a valid point of privilege, but I do thank him for raising this matter and permitting me to address the important topic of parliamentary privilege once again.

#### USE OF QUESTION PERIOD

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Before we start oral questions, I would ask the indulgence of the members to allow me to take a bit of time to clarify the use of the rules around the issue of supplementary questions.

Let me first direct the attention of the House to what the rules say about supplementary questions. Standing order 36(c) provides for supplementary questions "arising out of the minister's reply." Additionally, in Marleau and Montpetit's *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, supplementary questions are described as "a follow-up device flowing from the response."

Successive Speakers since 1975 have affirmed in this House that supplementary questions must arise out of the minister's answer to the original question and have ruled out of order supplementaries which do not do so.

While some degree of latitude has been exercised of late with respect to the relationship between a supplementary question and the original question and answer, it has been my observation that there is a growing tendency for there to be little or no relationship at all.

Many questions—and we have reviewed—have been asked in this session from both sides of the House that, although they may be thinly related to the same subject matter, do not arise out of the minister's reply, nor, frankly, do they even relate to the same ministry. These are really separate questions that should be asked when the member next has the floor.

Members should take notice that I will be exercising enhanced vigilance with respect to the orderliness of supplementary questions in the future.

1410

**Mr. Peter Kormos:** On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I thank you for your attention to standing order 36(c). We appreciate your direction in that regard and trust that you will be similarly and as vigorously applying 36(d).



## ORAL QUESTIONS

## TOBACCO SMUGGLING

**Mr. Robert W. Runciman:** I'm confident that that commentary wasn't directed at me.

My question is to the Minister of Finance and has to do with the proliferation of contraband or illegal cigarettes in Ontario. We're seeing estimates that one out of every three cigarettes smoked in Ontario today is an illegal product.

Minister, can you indicate to the House today what work your ministry has done on this issue and what the cost is in lost tax revenues to the provincial treasury?

**Hon. Dwight Duncan:** I refer this question to the Minister of Community Safety.

**Hon. Rick Bartolucci:** First of all, let's make it perfectly clear that the feds own the border. But we have a responsibility to work with our federal government, with the federal police force, and with US police forces to ensure that we limit the amount of illegal activity at the border. We're committed to doing that. We do that through the OPP and we will continue to be a very, very active partner as we work together to develop strategies that will ensure that illegal contraband does not enter the province of Ontario.

**Mr. Robert W. Runciman:** These guys are the world's number one pass-the-buck artists. I want to say, and put on the record, that police and anti-smoking groups agree that illegal cigarettes now account for 25% to 30% of tobacco consumption in Ontario. We're also told that the lost revenue is estimated to be in the neighbourhood of \$600 million a year. That's why the Minister of Finance didn't want to respond.

The minister and his Liberal colleagues seem to have no reservations about breaking promises and sticking hard-working and, I should say, law-abiding, Ontarians with a new \$60-million tire tax. But when it comes to dealing with an illicit product with clear linkages to organized crime, where profits buy illegal guns, it's hands off. Why is that, Minister? Why are you writing off \$600 million and declining to enforce the rule of law?

**Hon. Rick Bartolucci:** Obviously, we fundamentally disagree, with the approaches that we're using. Certainly we're a part of the International Border Enforcement Team, which targets cross-border criminal activity like tobacco smuggling. The lead agency of that is the RCMP, but the OPP is also a partner in that. We continue to work with our federal police services to ensure that we aggressively ensure that the amount of contraband tobacco entering this province is at a minimum.

**Mr. Robert W. Runciman:** Boy, I just have to shake my head at that. I want to put a few other facts on the record: We're advised that 24% of Ontario students who smoke are smoking illegal product—as well as no tax and no health warnings. We're also advised that your government is allowing an illegal cigarette store to operate on provincial government land near a high school. So

let's get this straight: Your strategy is to turn a blind eye to illegal operations, some with ties to organized crime, shrug your shoulders over the loss of \$600 million a year, put the health of young people at risk, and then, by the way, whack law-abiding Ontarians with a new \$60-million tax. Is that the Liberal strategy?

**Hon. Rick Bartolucci:** I outlined the strategy, but let me reinforce the strategy again: We will continue to be a part of the International Border Enforcement Team, which is made up of the RCMP, the OPP and United States law enforcement agencies. We will also continue to ensure that we work with the federal government in any way possible to ensure that we limit the amount of contraband tobacco that enters the province of Ontario.

We would also like the federal government to work with us to ensure that the same effort that we're putting into ensuring illegal handguns don't enter the province of Ontario—we would ask the federal government to work aggressively with us to ensure that there is a federal handgun ban.

## TOURISM STUDY

**Mr. Ted Arnott:** My question is for the Premier. About three weeks ago, the member for Vaughan was appointed by the government to do a tourism study. He said at the time that he would deliver a final report to the government early next year. However, this year's budget allocates \$8 million over the next two years for the Sorbara tourism study. Can the Premier explain this discrepancy?

**Hon. Dalton McGuinty:** To the Minister of Tourism.

**Hon. Peter Fonseca:** I thank the member for the question. This government believes strongly in tourism as an economic driver. We know that it brings \$21 billion to our GDP here in this province, \$6.7 billion in exports, and it touches every community across this province.

The tourism sector is going through a transformation right now. That's why we're delighted that Greg Sorbara is chairing this competitiveness study. This competitiveness study will be very comprehensive in its breadth. It's going to be looking not only at the tourism sector but at the broader business sector. It will be looking at investment to this province. We'll be making sure that we are competitive in this new world that we're living in when it comes to tourism.

**Mr. Ted Arnott:** The challenges facing Ontario's tourism partners are immediate. Families are beginning to plan their summer holidays. In part because of confusion at the border, the ministry's most recent numbers show that same-day trips from the US are down 29% year over year. Some experts are predicting that gasoline prices may hit \$1.50 a litre this summer. The continued strength of the Canadian dollar is an uphill battle for our tourism partners.

These challenges necessitate immediate action. How can the minister possibly argue that this study, dragging out for more than two years, will do anything to help tourism today?



**Hon. Peter Fonseca:** I thank the member for the supplementary. To go into a little more depth as to what this comprehensive study means, because of the challenges that we have before us that are happening across Canada and, yes, here in Ontario—the high dollar, high oil, passport requirements, as well as border issues—that's why the member for Vaughan will be looking at this in a comprehensive way, to be able to bring the solutions that we need to create and keep a sustainable, viable tourism sector, a sector that employs 300,000 people across this province and a sector that is building on the great attractions that we have.

We've invested a lot in our cultural attractions. Our ROM, as I mentioned yesterday, has just been noted in *Condé Nast Traveller* magazine as one of the new seven wonders—

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Thank you. Final supplementary.

**Mr. Ted Arnott:** It's becoming increasingly clear that this tourism study is little more than a farewell tour for the member for Vaughan, the \$8-million man, all at the taxpayers' expense. His appointment insults the Minister of Tourism, whose budget has been cut 27%, according to the *Globe and Mail*.

Will the real Minister of Tourism please stand up? Have they given this two-year task to the member for Vaughan because he's their chief political strategist and fundraiser and they need to keep him around here as long as possible? Why didn't they just appoint the member for Vaughan to a standing committee of this House, assign the tourism study to that committee, and ask for a report within three months, which wouldn't have cost the taxpayers an extra nickel?

**Hon. Peter Fonseca:** I thank the member for the question. It gives me a great opportunity to talk about how our government is different from the previous government. How we're different is that we work with our stakeholders in partnership. This comprehensive competitiveness study was asked for by the tourism sector stakeholders, knowing full well that this was the right time to bring this forward. They asked for somebody who would bring great leadership and who had the financial wherewithal, understanding finance very well. That's why we brought forward the experience that the member for Vaughan brings to chairing this comprehensive competitiveness study. It is what the sector has asked for. They are delighted.

1420

I'll tell you what the Ottawa Citizen had to say: "It is wise that Premier Dalton McGuinty has put the arm on ... Greg Sorbara to develop a strategy aimed at drawing international tourists"—

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Thank you. New question.

#### CHILD POVERTY

**Mr. Howard Hampton:** I have a question for the Premier. Today's Campaign 2000 report confirmed that

Ontario has become the child poverty capital of Canada, with 345,000, or nearly half of all of Canada's low-income children, living in Ontario. Meanwhile, Quebec, with a child poverty rate of 22% in 1997, has brought their child poverty rate down to 9.6%. My question: Why has the McGuinty government failed to learn from Quebec's experience? Why did the McGuinty government fail to implement a real anti-poverty strategy in last week's budget?

**Hon. Dalton McGuinty:** I thank the honourable member for the question. I think it's first of all important to understand that the report that came out is based on 2005 data. Since that point in time, we have put in place an Ontario child benefit, we have raised social assistance three times, we have raised the minimum wage a number of times, and we have funded 22,000 affordable child care spaces. There's more work to be done, but I think by any objective measure, we are making progress; we are moving in the right direction.

**Mr. Howard Hampton:** The Premier may think he's headed in the right direction. In fact, the report shows that children living in poverty in Ontario today are living in deeper poverty than ever. One in every eight children in Ontario is in a family that lives below the poverty line. That's 345,000 children who aren't sure when they go home if they're going to have something to eat, if they'll have clothes on their backs or even if they'll have a place to sleep tonight.

Premier, last week your government shovelled out \$6.3 billion of new spending. How come children were next to forgotten in that \$6.3-billion spending spree?

**Hon. Dalton McGuinty:** Again, I remind my colleague that he's referring to a report based on 2005 data—that was three years ago—and also remind him that just recently, through our budget, we've doubled the funding for our student nutrition programs. We're putting in place, for the first time ever in the province of Ontario, a dental plan for low-income families. We also have in place our Ontario child benefit, which will provide needy families up to \$600 per child this year. That will continue to grow until it reaches \$1,100 per child. The fact of the matter is, that report also shows that in the final year, 2004-05, the provincial child poverty rate actually declined slightly.

I think we've got the trend moving in the right direction. There is more work to be done, and we look forward to doing it.

**Mr. Howard Hampton:** Premier, the nutrition plan amounts to \$1 per week. It's going to buy next to nothing for those kids who can't get enough to eat. Their so-called dental program will basically pay to extract teeth; that is about it.

The real reason that Ontario has so many poor kids is because the McGuinty government continues to claw back money from the lowest-income kids, and your government continues to try to justify that.

The fact remains that in last week's budget, you had \$6.3 billion of new spending to roll out, yet at the same time you're going to continue to claw back \$50 a month



from the lowest-income kids in the province. Can you tell me, Premier, what kind of anti-poverty strategy is that?

**Hon. Dalton McGuinty:** I want to remind my colleague that Campaign 2000 described our Ontario child benefit as a very positive step. The Ontario child benefit, to remind all members and Ontarians, is a \$2.1-billion investment in children and their families that has never existed before. It will reach 1.3 million children, it will support 600,000 families, and it's making a difference. A single parent on social assistance with two children is now receiving 27% more than they did in 2003. When the Ontario child benefit is fully in place, that same single parent on social assistance with two children will receive 34% more. So, again, it may not be enough to satisfy the NDP. He understands that there are huge cost pressures associated with the delivery of education, health care and protective measures for the environment, but we like to think we are moving in the right direction and we're making a significant difference in the quality of life for poor children in Ontario.

#### CHILD POVERTY

**Mr. Howard Hampton:** My question is to the Premier. The Premier says that this is an improvement. For the lowest-income kids in the province, it is not an improvement. What is happening is that they lose the winter clothing allowance, they lose the back-to-school clothing allowance, and you continue to claw back \$50 a month of income from those lowest-income kids. But as the Campaign 2000 report says, poverty rates for children in racialized, new immigrant and aboriginal families and single-parent households are at least double the provincial rate.

Premier, last week the McGuinty government had a chance to do something about that. At a time when you had \$6.3 billion in new spending to shower around, you couldn't spend \$250 million and end the clawback of the federal child benefit. How is that an effective anti-poverty strategy, when you spend \$6.3 billion but you couldn't spare \$250 million?

**Hon. Dalton McGuinty:** To the Minister of Children and Youth Services.

**Hon. Deborah Matthews:** Let me start by thanking Campaign 2000 for the report. This is an organization that has been tireless in their advocacy. They make a real contribution to the debate. I thank them for the report and for their ongoing advocacy.

What I think this report does for all of us is underline the importance of developing a comprehensive poverty reduction strategy, complete with measures and timelines, starting with children. As has already been discussed, this report is based on 2005 data. It reflects the first year only of our government. But for the first time since 2001, it actually shows a decline in the number of children living in poverty: almost 5,000 fewer children. There's much more to be done, but we're moving in the right direction.

**Mr. Howard Hampton:** What we know has happened over the last two years is that the hydro bill has gone up, the heating bill has gone up, the food bill has gone up, the transit fares have gone up, and in 2006 there was no increase in social assistance. The fact of the matter, what this report shows, is that the McGuinty government's anti-poverty plan is a national disgrace. Social assistance rates, when you factor in inflation, are lower now than they were in 1967. The average two-parent low-income family lives \$10,000 below the poverty line. I say again: The McGuinty government had a chance last week—\$6.3 billion of new spending, and you couldn't spare \$250 million to end the clawback of the national child benefit. Why, after four and a half years of the McGuinty government, do we still not have real action?

**Hon. Deborah Matthews:** We've had this conversation several times this week, and I'm happy to keep having it, but I thought maybe it's time for some others to weigh in on the conversation. Let me read this quote: "I'm just thrilled by this legislation. Dalton McGuinty is a good man, and he really heard us. We never dreamed we'd get anything this good." From June Callwood.

"This is a great day and a great change. It's historic." That's a quote from Michael Mendelsohn, the senior scholar at the Caledon Institute of Social Policy.

Michael Oliphant, the director of research and communications at the Daily Bread Food Bank, had this to say about the Ontario child benefit, and you still voted against it: "We believe the OCB marks a significant turning point in Ontario."

Finally, if I may, a quote: "The Ontario child benefit will reduce barriers faced by"—

**The Speaker:** Thank you. Final supplementary.

1430

**Mr. Howard Hampton:** The McGuinty government wants to continue to promote a program that continues to take money away from the lowest-income kids in the province. Here is what Campaign 2000 had to say, and this is really telling: "Although Ontario's child and family poverty rate has declined since the peak in the mid-1990s, the average low-income family is living as deeply in poverty now as they were 10 years ago when the economy was in a downturn. Deepening poverty is reflected in increasing food bank use. The number of people using Ontario food banks increased by 14.3% ... 123,600 were children."

Minister, you can talk and promote your program, which continues to take \$50 a month away from the lowest-income kids, but the real question is this: When the McGuinty government had \$6.3 billion of new spending last week, how come next to nothing went to poor kids?

**Hon. Deborah Matthews:** I don't know how you define "next to nothing," but I'd be happy to continue here. As I was saying, and this is a quote, "The Ontario child benefit will reduce barriers faced by families with children who are trying to leave welfare for work. At the same time, it will ... reduce child poverty and hunger."



That's from Gail Nyberg, executive director of the Daily Bread Food Bank.

The 2005 report does not reflect this historic change in supporting children in low-income families. Over the course of the year, families will receive more than the total amount of the back-to-school and the winter coat allowance through their monthly Ontario child benefit. But we do recognize that some families on social assistance will be facing a short-term crunch during the transition to the OCB, and that is why we are setting up a special fund to support families—

**The Speaker:** Thank you. New question.

#### DEVELOPMENT FEES

**Mr. Toby Barrett:** To the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs: On March 26, you said, with respect to HDI demands on builders, "that they absolutely, obviously, not pay it." However, we received an e-mail yesterday from a company stating, "The belated policy of the Ontario government doesn't help us, as we paid the \$7,000 fee in August 2007." Why did they pay? I quote again: "Because the MOE, who has still not approved our EA due to the Six Nations issue, required we consult with Six Nations for our Grand Valley wind project."

Minister, company consultation is required by government—this company understands that consultation comes with a price—but on the other hand, you say, "Don't pay." You're speaking out of both sides of your mouth: environment and aboriginal affairs. Minister, do you know who's in charge?

**Hon. Michael Bryant:** Most companies in Ontario that are doing business either with First Nations or on territory that is neighbouring to First Nations already attempt to enter into partnerships, to enter into a relationship with that local First Nation, just as they would want to work with the local municipality and the local community. Even Wal-Mart, when they come into a community, attempts to integrate into that community.

The member is trying to suggest that consultation includes taxation, and the member is absolutely wrong. Let me say it again: The member is trying to suggest that consultation equals taxation, and the member is absolutely wrong.

**Mr. Toby Barrett:** I'm trying to suggest that the left hand doesn't know what the right hand is doing. MOE says, "Do this," you say, "Don't do that," and builders are left on their own.

We have government for a reason: to set policy, to set direction. Thanks to your mixed reaction, we are now wondering when the next confrontation is going to be. Given your advice to not pay it, I ask: What guarantee would you offer today to protect builders from repercussions, whether it be blockades or, in the very sad case of Sam Gualtieri, coming within an inch of losing his life at the end of a piece of oak stair rail? For builders who do not pay, will your government now back them up?

**Hon. Michael Bryant:** I know that the member certainly would not want to in any way advocate for an

escalation of tension, and I know that the member wouldn't want to be suggesting that a confrontation is inevitable, because in fact, the way through, as we know from the Ipperwash commission recommendations, is to resolve these issues at the table.

That's why I spoke with band council chief Bill Montour and tribal council chief Allan McNaughton to ask about the possibility of creating a side provincial table for provincial and municipal issues to be discussed apart from the treaty claims. Specifically, I made the request that it mean that HDI or any other people protesting a development in that area or any other area leave those streets and leave those sidewalks and leave those protests to join in the negotiations.

#### CHILD POVERTY

**Ms. Andrea Horwath:** My question is for the Minister of Children and Youth Services. Today, Andrea Duffield was here with Campaign 2000, looking for help from the McGuinty government, looking for action on child poverty. Andrea is a single mom with three children. She's been to school, she's been to work, and she still cannot lift her family out of poverty. What has the McGuinty government done to help Andrea and her children?

**Hon. Deborah Matthews:** Again, thank you for the question. I'm grateful for the focus on this important issue.

Let's talk about what is not in this report, because it is based on 2005 data. This report does not reflect any of the investments we have made since then. It does not include three of the four increases to social assistance rates. It does not include the increases of the minimum wage from the current \$8.75 on its way to \$10.25 by 2010. It does not include the creation of the Ontario child benefit to provide assistance to over a million children in 600,000 families across Ontario. A single parent with two children, on social assistance—this is a very important acknowledgment—is now 27% better off than when we took office in 2003.

**Ms. Andrea Horwath:** Perhaps the minister would like to know that families like Andrea Duffield and her children have lived in poverty for the entire time that this government has been in office. She's not an old statistic. She is actually living proof that the McGuinty government's policies are failing our poorest children and families. If so much is being done on that side of the House, why are Andrea Duffield and her children still living in poverty?

**Hon. Deborah Matthews:** I am committed, as is my caucus and as is the Premier, to developing a comprehensive poverty reduction strategy with measures, with targets. We will be reporting by the end of the year.

We are as motivated to deal with this issue as anyone in this House, and I think the acknowledgment of the progress that we have made is important. The support for the progress going forward is important. There was just a vote on the budget. The member opposite voted against a



dental benefit for low-income families, voted against the doubling of the student nutrition program, voted against \$100 million to repair affordable housing, and voted against an additional \$150 million for the Ontario child benefit. I will put our record of action and continued action against your—

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Thank you. New question.

## RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

**Mr. Yasir Naqvi:** To the Minister of Research and Innovation: In February, it was announced that over \$6 million is being invested through the Ontario research fund in support of three world-class projects at the University of Ottawa solving serious issues facing our province and our planet, including an innovative new system for diverting large amounts of waste from landfills. As well, I note that Carleton University in my own riding of Ottawa Centre has benefited from over \$10 million in Ontario research fund support. This funding has facilitated groundbreaking research.

Minister, what is our government doing to ensure that this very important money keeps flowing to our researchers?

1440

**Hon. John Wilkinson:** I want to thank my friend the new member for Ottawa Centre for his tireless advocacy for his community—a powerhouse of innovation in the province of Ontario.

Our government is very proud of the research being done in Ontario's colleges, universities and research institutions, and at every opportunity we vote for budgets that allow us to have the money to do that work, unlike others in this House. Investing in research and innovation is a priority for our government because we believe that innovation is the foundation for Ontario's next generation of jobs and prosperity. That's why the Premier created our ministry, the Ministry of Research and Innovation, and why we've committed some \$3 billion over the next eight years to this important work.

Ontario is investing in an aggressive innovation agenda to ensure that we seize the global opportunities of the 21st century for our children and grandchildren. I believe that the investments that we're making in the University of Ottawa and Carleton University are wonderful and are opening up—

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Thank you. Supplementary.

**Mr. Yasir Naqvi:** I know that one of the goals of your ministry is to turn groundbreaking research such as that done at Carleton University and the University of Ottawa into commercialized products and services that can be produced here in Ontario. What measures were there in the budget to help researchers and entrepreneurs in my riding of Ottawa Centre who want to keep these home-grown solutions and bring them to the global marketplace?

**Hon. John Wilkinson:** That's a great question. I want to share with the members the new measure that we have talked about and proposed in our budget, and I think the good people of Ontario will want to know who votes for this and who votes against it. We're going to do something first in North America. We're saying that if a new company in Ontario commercializes intellectual property that's been discovered at any Canadian university, college or research institution, you will, in the province of Ontario, pay absolutely no corporate tax for 10 years—a 10-year exemption.

We're open to the world. We're open in Ottawa, London, Toronto, Waterloo and throughout this great province of ours. We're open for business. If you have a great idea that's been discovered here in Canada, we want you to come to Ontario. Ontario is the place where we're going to commercialize, innovate and take those great ideas off the research shelf and turn them into the next generation of jobs for our children and grandchildren.

On this side, we are voting for it. I wonder how the opposition will vote on this.

## WORKPLACE SAFETY AND INSURANCE BOARD

**Mr. Robert Bailey:** My question today is to the Minister of Labour. During the time period of 2006-07, inflation generally was around 2% yet the present salary at the WSIB increased over 10%, from \$360,000 to \$397,000. That's more than five times the rate of inflation. Why is it that the personal compensation increases—

*Interjection.*

**Mr. Robert Bailey:** They're just making me feel at home.

Why is it that the personal compensation increases at the senior levels of the WSIB so excessively outpace inflation? We support, on this side of the House, fair wages for dedicated public servants, as we know the president of the board is. But how can you support the senior staff of the WSIB giving themselves major raises that are five times the rate of inflation?

**Hon. Brad Duguid:** I thank the member for his question and remind him that after they were finished with the WSIB, we had to do a major audit just to try to put it back together again.

This is a \$4-billion operation. It's one of the largest insurance firms on the entire continent. There are 4,000 staff involved here. Working with the WSIB, the bottom line is that this government has been able to reduce workplace injuries by close to 20% in the years since we've been in office. This organization, working with this government, is making excellent progress when it comes to looking after injured workers. We're going to continue to work with the WSIB, we're going to continue to go to bat for injured workers and we're going to continue to ensure that this third-party agency continues to operate in a very efficient way.



**Mr. Robert Bailey:** I commend the board on decreasing accidents, but that wasn't my question. My question was in regard to the unconscionable inflation increases in the board's salaries. The president's went up a whopping 56%: from \$253,000 in 2005 to almost \$400,000 in 2007. That's almost 10 times the rate of inflation.

This is going on at the same time as the board's finances are crumbling. From 2006 to 2007, your unfunded liability in this area hit its highest point since 1997, at \$8 billion. That's up too, from 2006. According to the WSIB, the unfunded liability is expected to go to \$9 billion by the end of next year. Will this minister order a full review of the unconscionable salary levels at the WSIB, order a rollback of the CEO's salary to inflationary levels and subject the WSIB executive compensation levels to the very same inflation levels given to your injured workers?

**Hon. Brad Duguid:** Mr. Speaker, working with the Ministry of Labour, the WSIB has been able to reduce workplace injuries very dramatically over the last number of years. As a former Minister of Labour, you would know, as would Mr. Bentley as a former Minister of Labour, that we have made a great deal of progress. We're very much on the road to a 20% reduction; reaching our goals. Reducing workplace injuries saves businesses across this province money, and it ensures that they're getting value for the dollars that they put into this insurance program. At the same time, for the first time in nine years, we've been able to significantly increase the benefits for injured workers: 2.5% last July and 2.5% last January, and we're online to increase benefits by a further 2.5% in January. This organization is making progress, working in partnership with our government.

#### AFFORDABLE HOUSING

**Ms. Cheri DiNovo:** My question is for the Premier. Premier, 165 million of federal dollars for affordable housing may be rescinded by March 2009 because of the McGuinty government's inaction on affordable housing. My question is a very straightforward one, Premier: Why are you clawing back federal housing dollars from the poorest Ontarians?

**Hon. Dalton McGuinty:** I'm mystified by the question. What I can say by way of fact is that our Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, Minister Watson, is in Ottawa today meeting with his provincial counterparts and his federal counterpart as well. The issue that we're putting on the table for the federal government is the fact that the federal money for housing runs out in 2009.

The case that we'll be making on behalf of Ontarians—and I believe it's one that's embraced by our colleagues throughout the nation—is that we need to have a national housing strategy in place. It needs to be long-term and sustainable. It needs to support the needs of all Canadians. This is an issue of concern not just to us here in Ontario, but indeed across the country. So we'll be asking the federal government to help us so that we

can work together and put in place a national housing strategy, which provides, among other things, funding we can continue to rely on long into the future.

**Ms. Cheri DiNovo:** This is passing strange. We don't have a provincial housing strategy, we have no provincial affordable housing strategy, yet we're looking to the feds to fill in the gap. They've given this government money. This government isn't spending the money they already have on affordable housing.

I ask my question again: Why is the McGuinty government clawing back federal dollars from the poorest Ontarians?

**Hon. Dalton McGuinty:** Just so you know what's happening, we have 18,000 affordable housing units in the works. Roughly speaking, 4,300 new units have now been built. Roughly speaking, 3,000 are now under construction. Roughly speaking, 4,000 are awaiting planning approval. Roughly 4,000 are in the early planning stages. In our budget of 2007, we talked about 1,800 more units. There are 1,100 off-reserve aboriginal housing units that will be delivered once consultations with aboriginal groups are complete. We're talking a total of 18,000 affordable housing units.

The NDP say that's not enough. We'd like to be able to do more, but we think it's a step in the right direction. We look forward, over time, to doing more.

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#### AGRICULTURE INDUSTRY

**Mr. Pat Hoy:** My question is to the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. Constituents in my riding have been telling me that they are interested in finding out more about the wonderful fresh food produced in Ontario by our local farmers. Buying local is a great way to promote the local agricultural economy while, at the same time, protecting the environment.

Minister, could you please tell this House what our government is doing to promote Ontario foods and encourage Ontarians to buy locally?

**Hon. Leona Dombrowsky:** As usual, the member has always been a very strong advocate for agriculture and has brought issues that are important to farmers to this House.

I also appreciate the thumbs-up from the critic across the way, the member from Oxford and the critic for Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. This is not a partisan issue. Everyone in Ontario wants to support Ontario farms.

This government has made a very clear commitment. In the previous term, we committed \$12.5 million to our Pick Ontario Freshness strategy. In this budget, we have committed \$56 million over the next four years to help promote the very fine agricultural products that are produced right here in Ontario.

It's good for Ontario farmers. It's good for the communities they live in. It is certainly good for the people who consume these products, and it's also good for the



environment. We believe that it's an excellent investment and an excellent way to support the agriculture industry.

**Mr. Pat Hoy:** Minister, I know that you've worked very hard in bringing the importance of buying local to the top of mind for Ontario consumers. I know the farmers in my riding appreciate the Pick Ontario Freshness strategy, as it's aimed to open up the local market for them and helps them get a better return on the hard work and resources they've put into it.

Minister, could you please tell the members of the House more about our buy local strategy? And also, what is the government doing to lead by example in this regard?

**Hon. Leona Dombrowsky:** I'm always very happy to stand in this Legislature and talk about all of the good reasons why we should be preferring Ontario products, and also to share with you examples of our government's walking the talk. I do want to commend you, Speaker, as well. I've noticed that in our lobby, you are featuring Ontario products there as well.

I have had the opportunity, in the last budget and also in this budget, to ask staff to look at our own cafeterias here at the Legislature and at One Stone Road. I'm very happy to say that there is a concerted effort to ensure that we are sourcing local and Ontario products in those venues.

I also want to commend my colleague the Minister of Tourism. We are working very closely on the Savour Ontario initiative. That's an initiative whereby dining establishments are partnering with local producers to feature local items on their menus. We think this is a wonderful way to—

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Thank you, Minister. New question.

#### ONTARIO BUDGET

**Mrs. Joyce Savoline:** To the Premier: I would like to draw to the Premier's attention the distinct pattern arising under your watch. Your health tax is generating about \$3 billion a year, and yet that money has not been directed entirely to health care initiatives, as you clearly stated in your sales pitch.

Again, in the 2007 budget, ESL was not fully allocated to ESL programs, and yet education—despite statistics from Statistics Canada, its proof that three quarters of the new immigrants come to Toronto and into the province of Ontario, who will no doubt rely heavily on ESL programs during their transition to their new home.

My question to the Premier is: When are you going to stop this sleight of hand and fully allocate every penny of the—

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** I'd ask the member to withdraw the comment she made.

**Mrs. Joyce Savoline:** I withdraw the comment.

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Thank you. Premier?

**Hon. Dalton McGuinty:** To the Minister of Finance.

**Hon. Dwight Duncan:** I would refer the member to page 66 of the Ontario budget document, where it has a detailed breakdown of the increase in revenues associated with health care versus the increase in expenditures associated with health care.

Not only has every penny of the health premium gone to health care, a larger portion of all taxes has gone to health care. That's because we're investing in hospitals. That's because we're hiring nurses. That's because we're providing residential hospice care across the province. That's because we are going to be funding PSA testing for the first time. That's because of a range of initiatives this government has taken to ensure that health care remains one of our great competitive advantages.

**Mrs. Joyce Savoline:** The question was specifically about ESL funding, so I will ask the minister: The ESL teachers and, most important, their students are not benefiting from your creative bookkeeping. Every man, woman and child in Ontario is paying \$446 more per year in McGuinty taxes while receiving much less than they have been promised by your government. I ask you, Minister: When will your creative bookkeeping start to benefit the ESL students who desperately need for you to finally keep your promise? Give them their full funding allocation to enable them to reach their full potential.

**Hon. Dwight Duncan:** Minister of Education.

**Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne:** We've increased ESL funding. This year alone we're putting \$10 million more into ESL funding for all of our students.

The issue the member is talking about is the allocation of those dollars to ESL students. This year, all boards are going to be required to report to the ministry exactly where those ESL dollars are going. We've put a new policy in place, and that information will be public next year.

The reality is that when we came into office, boards were having to take money from one grant and put it into another because of the serious underfunding by the previous government. We've been sorting that out. We've changed the funding formula every year, and boards are now more able to spend their money where the money is allocated, and we're asking them to report on that in ESL.

#### ONTARIO BUDGET

**Mr. Michael Prue:** My question is for the Premier. How have single people with no dependants and no employment ability who receive Ontario disability support payment, been assisted by the McGuinty government since 2003?

**Hon. Dalton McGuinty:** The member opposite knows that minimum wage has gone up five times now. We've seen three or four increases now to social assistance. We've made some pretty fundamental changes to the rules to ensure that single individuals, as well as others who rely on social assistance, end up with greater benefits at the end of the day.



I think the single most important thing we're doing as a government is looking for an intelligent way to come to grips with poverty in Ontario. That's why we have struck a cabinet committee. That's why I've asked that cabinet committee, under the leadership of Minister Matthews, to come up with some indicators when it comes to poverty, to come up with some targets so that we can measure our performance and to come up with a focused strategy so we can achieve those targets. That committee is to report at the end of this year, and I look forward to acting on its recommendation. Of course, we are doing many things along the way.

**Mr. Michael Prue:** I'm not surprised at the Premier's answer, because the reality is that not much has been done: 92% of ODSP recipients are without children, so all the government programs that relate to that are for naught; 92% of them are incapable or unable to work, and they have medical papers to show that, and that is always through no fault of their own.

They are being driven deeper and deeper into poverty, and the miserly 7% increase since 2003 that your government has given is well below inflation. What is the McGuinty government going to do for the 192,000 people in Ontario who are disabled and do not have children? What are you going to do for them? Because you didn't do it in the last budget.

**Hon. Dalton McGuinty:** There are a couple of points I want to make on that. First of all, there have been four separate increases now to ODSP, and that follows hard on the heels of a nine-year freeze.

Beyond that, I think it's important to keep in mind that there's a tendency for us in government or in opposition to compartmentalize and bring kind of a siloesque view to these things. But I think it's really important, from an ODSP recipient's perspective, to understand that they rely to a very great extent on health care services. The health care budget has gone up, from 2003 to today, from about \$29 billion to over \$40 billion.

ODSP recipients have called upon those resources to an inordinate extent. That is perfectly understandable and perfectly supportable. I'd ask my honourable friend to keep in mind that it's not just a matter of the increase we've made to ODSP, but also of the heavy investments we continue to make in health care.

1500

## AUTISM TREATMENT

**Ms. Helena Jaczek:** Today is World Autism Awareness Day, and my question is for the Minister of Children and Youth Services.

I was pleased that on March 18, the minister, along with her colleague the Minister of Education, came to my riding for an autism town hall meeting in Markham. They heard directly from parents of children with autism.

Parents need to know that the government is hearing their concerns and working for children. Could the minister tell the Legislature what she heard from parents

that night and exactly what this government has done to improve services for children with autism?

**Hon. Deborah Matthews:** Let me first acknowledge that today is World Autism Awareness Day. I would like to pay tribute to the parents of children with autism for their tireless advocacy on behalf of the children and their tireless commitment to their children.

You're quite right. On March 18, Minister Wynne and I did attend a meeting with parents and families of children with autism. I can tell you that hearing first-hand, as I think we all like to do, really does make the issue real for us all. They know first-hand the challenges their children are facing.

We acknowledge that there is more to do, and we are continuing to improve services for children with autism. But I think it's important to note the extraordinary progress we have made over the past four years. We've removed the age-six cut-off, we've more than tripled funding to autism, more than doubled the number of kids receiving IBI—

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Thank you. Supplementary?

**Ms. Helena Jaczek:** Our government has gone a long way to improve and expand services for children with autism. Funding and treatment are essential for kids. However, it's important to recognize that parents of children with autism face enormous emotional and physical challenges every single day. These parents work incredibly hard so that their kids can have the best possible outcomes. Could the minister please outline how our government is working to make everyday life easier for parents of children with autism?

**Hon. Deborah Matthews:** The member is quite right: We need to support children with autism. We also need to support their families. That's why we've announced autism respite services to give more than 3,000 families a temporary break from the stress of caring for a child with autism, to do things the rest of us maybe take for granted: going to a movie or going away for the weekend. We have invested \$3.9 million this year for respite services and seasonal camps: March break camps for more than 500 children and youth with autism across Ontario, and an opportunity for more than 800 children and youth with autism to have a summer camp experience.

Parents don't care whether it's my ministry or another ministry; they just want support. That's why I'm very pleased to say that my ministry is working very closely with the Ministry of Education to support schools as they prepare to deliver IBI therapy on-site for the first time.

## CORRECTIONAL FACILITIES

**Ms. Laurie Scott:** My question is to the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services. I know that the staff at the Central East Correctional Centre in Lindsay are working diligently and are doing a remarkable job with the resources available to them during this lockdown.



Despite their efforts, we're hearing about numerous delays affecting bail hearings and court appearances, along with the community at large, which is concerned that it may be exposed to what is clearly a contagious virus.

Aside from hanging your hat on the hope that this will go away in 24 to 48 hours, as the minister responsible for public safety, what can you tell people to assure them that the health of Ontarians is being protected during outbreaks such as this?

**Hon. Rick Bartolucci:** I'd like to thank the member for the question and I'd like to thank her for recognizing the good job the staff is doing. It was important that she did that.

I'm not hanging my hat on any hope that this is going to be done in 24 or 48 hours; I'm hanging my hopes on the great job the staff is doing. The contingency plan they put into place is truly remarkable. The institution's medical staff is working very, very closely with the public health unit, and there is a process to isolate those affected members within the institution. We are using very unique ways to ensure that the process of the court system goes on as normally as possible, and I think all of this is attributable to the great planning that's being done at that particular institution. I am very, very proud of the staff.

**Ms. Laurie Scott:** On the Ministry of Health's website it states that "being prepared and planning ahead is critical to protecting" public safety.

You obviously are not following that statement. The health unit was notified last Thursday, which is nearly a week ago now, that the virus was in an outbreak fashion. They continued to take inmates in until yesterday afternoon. So your repeated statement of hoping that this will go away in 24 to 48 hours simply doesn't wash. It's an irresponsible approach, really, for the minister of public safety in the province to pursue.

Your own spokesperson said it is unknown how long the lockdown could last. So, in light of all the facts that have been presented, do you have a plan for the protection of Ontarians in case of a pandemic such as this, now that your hopes have been dashed that within 24 hours it will go away?

**Hon. Rick Bartolucci:** The fact of the matter is—and let the numbers speak for themselves—that in a facility that houses approximately 1,064 individuals, 55 have contracted the virus. The staff has put in place a contingency plan which is truly remarkable. There have been, over the course of the last two days, 293 video court appearances. Your fellow members said that bail couldn't be a part of it—69 were bail hearings. The staff is handling this in a truly professional way and I am very, very proud of what they have been able to accomplish over the course of the last three days.

#### ABORIGINAL RIGHTS

**Mr. Gilles Bisson:** To the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs: You will know that earlier this week, Grand Chief

Stan Louttit issued a press release on behalf of Mushkegowuk Council, which represents the James Bay and Chapleau communities. In this press release, he points to your failure to deal with the duty to consult the First Nation of KI in regard to the situation that's happening there. He ends his press release by saying the following: "I can guarantee you that a KI type of confrontation is going to happen in our territory sooner rather than later. Hopefully resource developers will wake up and take it upon themselves"—and this is important—"to recognize the duty to consult rather than relying on government tactics that have only shown to initiate confrontation."

My question simply is this: With the northern table being suspended by the First Nations, what action are you taking to ensure we don't have more First Nations leaders ending up behind bars?

**Hon. Michael Bryant:** Again, those individuals should not be behind bars, and that's the position that Ontario took before the court and the position that the province will continue to take. I don't know why the New Democrats would want to suggest otherwise; in fact, we're in agreement on that issue. We're in agreement that the incarceration of those individuals is not in the public interest and should not have happened.

The Ontario Superior Court found, contrary to what the member said, that the province had in fact discharged its duty to consult.

I was seeking to set a higher standard in meeting with KI First Nation, with chief and council, to try to get an agreement—not just consultation but an agreement—because it's quite true that these mining companies need to enter into partnerships with First Nations in order to see success. Contrary to what the member says, most do.

**Mr. Gilles Bisson:** But the answer, Minister, is that some don't, and that's where we have the problem. I agree that some, like De Beers, have gone out of their way to do the right thing, and the Mushkegowuk Council understands that. But there are others in my riding and other ridings across the province who don't want to follow that duty to consult, and it is up to you, as a government, to make sure that it happens.

Further, you're saying that it's only us as New Democrats who are saying that you failed to consult. I want to read to you what Grand Chief Stan Louttit had to say: "Superior Court rulings favouring First Nations and the need to consult have been ignored by the government. If these issues had been dealt with in a reasonable time, incarceration of First Nation leadership for protecting their lands would not have occurred."

Clearly, he's putting the ball in your court. I ask you again: What are you going to do to make sure that this issue is resolved and we don't have more First Nations leaders behind bars?

1510

**Hon. Michael Bryant:** There's no question that, firstly, what has to happen, and what is happening in most cases, is that the third party, the company, does engage—and the member acknowledges this—in consultation with



the First Nation for a wide variety of reasons, not the least of which is they are becoming partners and neighbours.

With respect to KI and with respect to any situation where there's a potential confrontation, I feel it's incumbent on the government to insert itself to try to resolve it and facilitate it, and that's exactly what I did. So starting in January, we began discussions with KI leadership, with chief and council, that led to a draft that offered, amongst other things, payment of legal fees, a provision of a new bilateral process and changes to the circumstances that would guarantee jobs. Then another draft was exchanged and another draft was exchanged, and that draft was translated as well.

The government is and ought to be doing everything it can to try to reach an agreement. In the meantime, there's no question: The first thing that has to happen is that these individuals need to get out of jail.

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** The time for question period has ended.

## VISITORS

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** I just want to take this opportunity, on behalf of the member from Durham, to welcome the grade 10 class from Bowmanville High School and their teacher Mr. David Rempel. Welcome to Queen's Park today.

## PETITIONS

### POPE JOHN PAUL II

**Mr. John Yakabuski:** "Petition to the Parliament of Ontario:

"Whereas the legacy of Pope John Paul II reflects his lifelong commitment to international understanding, peace and the defence of equality and human rights; and

"Whereas his legacy has an all-embracing meaning that is particularly relevant to Canada's multi-faith and multicultural traditions; and

"Whereas, as one of the great spiritual leaders of contemporary times, Pope John Paul II visited Ontario during his pontificate of more than 25 years and, on his visits, was enthusiastically greeted by Ontario's diverse religious and cultural communities;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario to grant speedy passage into law of the private member's bill by Newmarket-Aurora MPP Frank Klees entitled An Act to proclaim Pope John Paul II Day."

I support this petition. I affix my name to it and send it down with Adam.

## HOME CARE

**M<sup>me</sup> France Gélinas:** I have a petition from SEIU, signed by people from Iroquois Falls, Monteith, Val

Gagné, Timmins, Matheson, Kapuskasing, Moonbeam, Val Rita, Kirkland Lake, Cobalt, Temagami and Cochran.

"Whereas the Ontario government has continued the practice of competitive bidding for home care services; and

"Whereas the competitive bidding process has increased the privatization of Ontario's health care delivery, in direct violation of the Commitment to the Future of Medicare Act, 2004; and

"Whereas competitive bidding for home care services has decreased both the continuity and quality of care available to home care clients; and

"Whereas home care workers do not enjoy the same employment rights, such as successor rights, as all other Ontario workers have, which deprives them of termination rights, seniority rights and the right to move with their work when their employer agency loses a contract; ....

"We call on the government of Ontario:

"(1) to immediately stop the competitive bidding for home care services so home care clients can receive the continuity and quality of care they deserve; and

"(2) to extend successor rights under the Labour Relations Act to home care workers to ensure the home care sector is able to retain a workforce that is responsive to clients' needs."

I support this petition and will affix my name to it.

## LONG-TERM CARE

**Mr. Kim Craiton:** I am pleased to introduce this petition on behalf of my riding of Niagara Falls and thank Emily, Laura and Jessica Shaw for signing the petition. The petition reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"We, the people of Ontario, wish to thank the government of Ontario for listening and acting on concerns brought to your attention regarding the care of our most precious and most vulnerable citizens, our seniors. These are the people that through hard work, dedication and love created the great province of Ontario.

"We thank the government of Ontario for:

"Increasing funding for long-term care by almost \$800 million, a 38% increase;

"Funding almost 6,100 new full-time staff in long-term-care homes, including 2,300 nurses;

"Creating 1,200 RPN positions in our long-term-care homes, ensuring at least one new registered practical nurse in every one of our 628 homes;

"Opening 7,712 new long-term-care beds;

"Launching a program to redevelop 35,000 older long-term-care beds over the next 10 years, beginning in 2008;

"Introducing new legislation to improve care in long-term-care homes;

"Introducing new regulations requiring 24/7 coverage by a registered nurse and at least two baths per week;

"Increasing the food allowance per resident effective September 1, to ensure that residents are provided with



an improved range of nutritional menu options and having all meal plans reviewed and approved by a dietitian;

"Introducing a new requirement that, as of December 2005, all long-term-care homes arrange for physiotherapy services for their residents;

"Introducing legislation requiring tougher inspections and more accountability, and providing an action line, a province-wide toll-free information and complaint line, for long-term-care residents and their families; and

"Introducing better training for staff, including best-practices guidelines for nurses in LTC homes.... ;

"While all of the above have made wonderful improvements to the care of our elderly, there is still much more to be done that could improve the quality of life and preserve the dignity of our parents, grandparents, neighbours and friends;

"LTC homes are admitting people with a greater variety of care needs, including younger care residents with acquired brain injury, multiple sclerosis, Huntington's disease etc., and our elderly are becoming more frail.... ;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, hereby petition the government of Ontario to provide funding specifically to be used for the employment of personal support workers. These workers provide much of the daily care to the residents by assisting with personal care, transfers ... bathing and much-needed emotional support. By dedicating funding for the sole employment of personal support workers and by mandating a staff-to-resident ratio accordingly ... we would ensure our seniors are receiving proper care."

I'm pleased to affix my signature to this petition in support of it.

#### LORD'S PRAYER

**Mr. John O'Toole:** This is from the Carriage Country Baptist Church in my riding of Durham. Senior pastor Allen Crawford and many others have signed the petition, which reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the current McGuinty government is proposing to eliminate the Lord's Prayer from its" rightful "place at the beginning of daily proceedings in the Ontario Legislature; and

"Whereas the recitation of the Lord's Prayer has opened the Legislature every day since the 19th century; and

"Whereas the Lord's Prayer's message of forgiveness and the avoidance of evil is universal to the human condition; it is a valuable guide and lesson for a chamber that is too often an arena of conflict; and

"Whereas recognizing the diversity of the people of Ontario should be an inclusive process, not one which excludes traditions such as the Lord's Prayer;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, ask the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to preserve the daily recitation of the Lord's Prayer by the Speaker in the" Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

I'm pleased to sign this and endorse it on behalf of my constituents.

#### ANTI-SMOKING LEGISLATION

**Ms. Sophia Aggelonitis:** "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas children exposed to second-hand smoke are at a higher risk for respiratory illnesses including asthma, bronchitis and pneumonia, as well as sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS) and increased incidences of cancer and heart disease in adulthood; and

"Whereas the Ontario Medical Association supports a ban on smoking in vehicles when children are present, as they have concluded that levels of second-hand smoke can be 23 times more concentrated in a vehicle than in a house because circulation is restricted within a small space; and

"Whereas the Ipsos Reid poll conducted on behalf of the Ontario Tobacco-Free Network indicates that eight in 10 (80%) of Ontarians support 'legislation that would ban smoking in cars and other private vehicles where a child or adolescent under 16 years of age is present'; and

"Whereas Nova Scotia, California, Puerto Rico and South Australia recently joined several jurisdictions of the United States of America in banning smoking in vehicles carrying children;

"We, the undersigned, respectfully petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to approve Bill 11 and amend the Smoke-Free Ontario Act to ban smoking in vehicles carrying children 16 years of age and under."

I affix my signature and present it to page Ramandeep.

1520

#### LORD'S PRAYER

**Mrs. Julia Munro:** "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the current Liberal government is proposing to eliminate the Lord's Prayer from its place at the beginning of daily proceedings in the Legislature; and

"Whereas the recitation of the Lord's Prayer has opened the Legislature every day since the 19th century; and

"Whereas the Lord's Prayer's message is one of forgiveness, of providing for those in need of their 'daily bread' and of preserving us from the evils that we may fall into; it is a valuable guide and lesson for a chamber that is too often an arena for conflict; and

"Whereas recognizing the diversity of the people of Ontario should be an inclusive process, not one which excludes traditions such as the Lord's Prayer;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, ask the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to preserve the daily recitation of the Lord's Prayer by the Speaker in the Legislature."

I just want to say that I am pleased to be presenting these petitions on behalf of people from Kenora and Keewatin. As I am in agreement, I have affixed my signature. I'm pleased to give this to Natalie.

## ANTI-SMOKING LEGISLATION

**Mr. Jeff Leal:** I have a petition today for smoke-free cars: "Support Bill 11.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas children exposed to second-hand smoke are at a higher risk for respiratory illnesses including asthma, bronchitis and pneumonia, as well as sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS) and increased incidences of cancer and heart disease in adulthood; and

"Whereas the Ontario Medical Association supports a ban on smoking in vehicles when children are present, as they have concluded that levels of second-hand smoke can be 23 times more concentrated in a vehicle than in a house because circulation is restricted within a small space; and

"Whereas the Ipsos Reid poll conducted on behalf of the Ontario Tobacco-Free Network indicates that eight in 10 (80%) of Ontarians support 'legislation that would ban smoking in cars and other private vehicles where a child or adolescent under 16 years of age is present'; and

"Whereas Nova Scotia, California, Puerto Rico, and South Australia recently joined several jurisdictions of the United States of America in banning smoking in vehicles carrying children;

"We, the undersigned, respectfully petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to approve Bill 11 and amend the Smoke-Free Ontario Act to ban smoking in vehicles carrying children 16 years of age and under."

I agree with this petition and will affix my signature to it.

## LORD'S PRAYER

**Mr. Peter Shurman:** I have a petition here from 341 members of various churches in the riding of Thornhill.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the current Liberal government is proposing to eliminate the Lord's Prayer from its place at the beginning of daily proceedings in the Legislature; and

"Whereas the recitation of the Lord's Prayer has opened the Legislature every day since the 19th century; and

"Whereas the Lord's Prayer's message of forgiveness and the avoidance of evil is universal to the human condition; it is a valuable guide and lesson for a chamber that is too often an arena of conflict; and

"Whereas recognizing the diversity of the people of Ontario should be an inclusive process, not one which excludes traditions such as the Lord's Prayer;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, ask the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to preserve the daily recitation of the Lord's Prayer by the Speaker in the Legislature."

I have affixed my signature and file it with page Daniel.

## PUBLIC WASHROOMS

**Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti:** I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, and it reads as follows:

"Whereas the Toronto and greater Toronto area has the highest rate of Crohn's and ulcerative colitis in Canada;

"Whereas this disease requires patients' fast access to public washrooms;

"Whereas there is a lack of public washrooms on the current TTC subway system and lack of access for these patients;

"Whereas the Ontario building code only requires the TTC to build public washrooms at the end-of-line stations;

"Whereas the York subway line is about to be built with provincial dollars;

"We, the undersigned, therefore request the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing to amend the Ontario building code to provide public washrooms at every station on the York subway line."

I agree with this petition. I affix my signature to it and hand it to page Alexander.

## WYE MARSH WILDLIFE CENTRE

**Mr. Garfield Dunlop:** "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Wye Marsh Wildlife Centre, located in the township of Tay, manages approximately 3,000 acres of environmentally sensitive land which is owned by the province of Ontario; and

"Whereas over 50,000 people visit the Wye Marsh Wildlife Centre each year; and

"Whereas over 20,000 students from across Ontario visit the Wye Marsh Wildlife Centre each year, receiving curriculum-based environmental education not available in schools; and

"Whereas the Wye Marsh Wildlife Centre receives no stable funding from any level of government;

"We, the undersigned, petition the province of Ontario to establish a reasonable and stable long-term funding formula so that the Wye Marsh Wildlife Centre can continue to operate and exist into the future."

I'd like to affix my signature to this and give it to Jacqui.

## EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

**Mr. Lou Rinaldi:** I have a petition here addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the federal government's employment insurance surplus now stands at \$54 billion; and

"Whereas over 75% of Ontario's unemployed are not eligible for employment insurance because of Ottawa's unfair eligibility rules; and



"Whereas an Ontario worker has to work more weeks to qualify and receives fewer weeks of benefits than other Canadian unemployed workers; and

"Whereas the average Ontario unemployed worker gets \$4,000 less in EI benefits than unemployed workers in other provinces and thus, unemployed are not qualifying for many retraining programs;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to press the federal government to reform the employment insurance program and to end this discrimination and unfairness towards Ontario's unemployed workers."

I affix my signature and have Madeline deliver it to the desk.

### LORD'S PRAYER

**Mr. John O'Toole:** It's my pleasure to present a petition on behalf of the constituents of the riding of Durham, more specifically Port Perry/Prince Albert United Church, the pastoral charge, sent to me by Pat Bird, who is the administrator. It reads as follows:

"To Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the current Liberal government is proposing to eliminate the Lord's Prayer from its" rightful "place at the beginning of daily proceedings in the Legislature; and

"Whereas the recitation of the Lord's Prayer has opened the Legislature every day since the 19th century; and

"Whereas the Lord's Prayer's message of forgiveness and avoidance of evil is universal to the human condition and is a valuable guide and lesson for a chamber that is too often an arena of conflict; and

"Recognizing the diversity of the people of Ontario should be an inclusive process, not one which excludes traditions such as the Lord's Prayer;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, ask the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to preserve the daily recitation of the Lord's Prayer by the Speaker in the Legislature."

I am pleased to present this on behalf of my constituents, sign it and present it to Natalie.

### ORDERS OF THE DAY

#### ORDER OF BUSINESS

**Hon. David Caplan:** On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I seek unanimous consent to put forward a motion respecting this afternoon's debate on Bill 16.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath):** The government House leader has put a motion regarding the allocation of time and seeks unanimous consent. Does everyone agree? Agreed.

**Hon. David Caplan:** I move that the time available until 5:50 for this afternoon's debate on Bill 16 be divided equally among the recognized parties and that at the end of the time the Speaker shall, without further

debate or amendment, put every question necessary to dispose of the second reading stage of the bill.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath):** Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

*Agreed to.*

### CHRISTOPHER'S LAW (SEX OFFENDER REGISTRY) AMENDMENT ACT, 2008

### LOI DE 2008 MODIFIANT LA LOI CHRISTOPHER SUR LE REGISTRE DES DÉLINQUANTS SEXUELS

Mr. Bartolucci moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 16, An Act to amend Christopher's Law (Sex Offender Registry), 2000 / Projet de loi 16, Loi modifiant la Loi Christopher de 2000 sur le registre des délinquants sexuels.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath):** Mr. Bartolucci.

**Hon. Rick Bartolucci:** Last December I introduced Bill 16 to amend Christopher's Law, the legislation establishing Ontario's sex offender registry. I'm pleased to have the opportunity to speak to this legislation again on second reading. I'll be sharing my time today with my parliamentary assistant for community safety and the member for Ottawa Centre, Yasir Naqvi.

Community safety is a key priority for the government. Christopher's Law is one tool in helping to secure the protection of our community. Ontario was the first, and remains the only, province in Canada to have its own sex offender registry. Christopher's Law requires sex offenders convicted of criteria sex offences to register with the police service in their area of residence. Christopher's Law represents a vital step in fighting crime, protecting vulnerable children and adults and safeguarding our communities. It has proven very helpful to police in keeping track of sex offenders in the community, in conducting investigations into sex crimes and, in some cases, in preventing them.

1530

The sex offender registry is far more than just a database. It includes such information as name, date of birth, current address, current photograph, and particulars of the sex offence for which the offender is responsible. The registry has been used many times to identify when sex offenders are at high risk to re-offend or when they position themselves so that they are living with or have access to children. The police, during verification of a sex offender's address, can now make a determination as to whether a child is in need of protection.

Research shows that time is critical when investigating the abduction of a child for a sexual purpose. The timely information the registry provides could help prevent a sexual offence and may even save a life. By giving law enforcement agencies a reliable and effective electronic



tool in the Ontario sex offender registry and the support services to track sexual offenders in our communities, we improve the investigation of crimes of a sexual nature.

Today, police across Ontario consult the sex offender registry about 495 times each day. It helps them monitor and locate sex offenders in their communities. It's a proven investigative tool and, most importantly, it's helping to protect vulnerable children and adults from predators. That's what makes the Ontario registry so useful for police across the province. It helps them know who the sex offenders are in their community, and in turn lets them determine who are the most dangerous before a crime is committed.

Last December, the Auditor General delivered his report to the Legislature, following a value-for-money audit of the sex offender registry. I want to again thank the Auditor General for the thoughtful observations and valuable recommendations in that report. Bill 16 is our response to those recommendations. If passed, it would address many of the concerns noted by the Auditor General about the operation of Christopher's Law. It would allow the registry and police to track more offenders in the community and to do so more quickly. The Auditor General's report recognized the dedication and diligent efforts of the ministry staff who worked to create the registry. It also noted that the team had worked cost-effectively over the last six years. We are indeed proud of the work of this group. They've worked very, very hard in making a success of the legislation.

Almost 20 years ago, 11-year-old Christopher Stephenson was brutally murdered by a convicted pedophile on federal statutory release. Christopher's family, victims' groups and law enforcement agencies worked tirelessly to prevent a similar tragedy from happening again. They sought mandatory registration for convicted sex offenders. Ontario responded with Christopher's Law, the first sex offender registry in Canada, and it was a step that spurred nationwide co-operation. Six years ago, we couldn't track convicted sexual predators because there was no registry. Now, convicted offenders are being tracked. Six years ago, we didn't have a compliance rate because there was no registry. Now, we have a sex offender registry with 95% compliance, one of the highest rates of any sex offender registry in North America. I want to assure my fellow members, the Legislature and the people of Ontario that we remain committed to reaching 100% compliance, but, as the Auditor General recommended and as our own experience has shown, there is still more we can do.

The Auditor General found that not all convicted sex offenders living in the community are required to register, and recommended some revisions to the legislation to ensure that the following persons register: offenders on temporary absence pass or day parole, the not-criminally-responsible on a temporary absence pass, offenders serving intermittent sentences, and offenders in the process of appealing convictions.

In addition, the report pointed to a number of areas where the effectiveness of the registry could be im-

proved. Indeed, we have already implemented many of the Auditor General's recommendations. Those offenders identified by the Auditor General as missing from the registry have now been investigated. Those who should have been registered are now on the registry. We are working closely with other provinces and the federal government to improve the effectiveness of the registry. As of March 2008, all offenders who can get mail will receive an annual reminder letter to remind them to go and register. We are now proposing changes to the legislation to allow police to track even more sex offenders and help keep Ontario even safer.

Bill 16 is the government's response to the recommendations of the Auditor General for legislative change and reflects our experience and the lessons we have learned over the past six years in establishing and operating Canada's first sex offender registry. This legislation would require more offenders to register and provide more tools for police to track offenders.

The new legislation would, if passed, require sex offenders serving an intermittent sentence to register within 15 days of sentencing. Currently, they are not required to report until they have completed their sentence. It would require that all those who are released on bail pending an appeal in relation to a sex offence register within 15 days of being released on bail. Currently, such persons are not required to register pending the outcome of their appeal. It would require police services to notify the Ontario sex offender registry immediately if they receive a notification from a mental health facility that a person who is not criminally responsible for a sex offence on account of a mental disorder with a detention disposition is being released from the facility unsupervised—for example, on a day pass. Currently, such persons are not required to register until they are given an absolute or conditional discharge by the Ontario Review Board.

Additionally, Bill 16 would require provincial corrections facilities to notify the registry of all sex offenders who are released from a correctional facility on an unescorted temporary absence pass 24 hours prior to release. Currently, the registry has no information on the release of such persons into the community on an unescorted temporary pass. They are not required to register until they have completed the custodial portion of their sentence for a sex offence.

As federal day parolees fall under federal jurisdiction, the province is working with the federal government to ensure that the necessary coordination will occur.

If adopted, these changes would require registration of more offenders in the community and enable the registry to have more valuable, up-to-date information.

We are moving quickly to make Christopher's Law stronger and more effective. As I said earlier, the safety of our community is of paramount importance. The Ontario sex offender registry remains today one of the most effective ways of tracking convicted sex offenders in our community. Its success is proven in the experience of police services across Ontario that rely on its data not just



to investigate sexual offences but, in some cases, to prevent crime.

Bill 16 is truly our opportunity to improve on an effective community safety tool that helps us safeguard the community. If passed, Bill 16 would make Ontario's sex offender registry an even more effective tool than it already is. That means greater safety and security for all Ontarians.

Thank you, and I'll ask my parliamentary assistant to continue.

1540

**Mr. Yasir Naqvi:** First, I want to extend my thanks to the Premier and the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services for their stewardship on this very important issue of community safety.

Christopher's Law is an important piece of legislation. It is based on a very simple proposition; that is, if police know the whereabouts of all convicted sex offenders in the community, they are better able to identify potential threats and can better focus their investigation on actual crimes.

Under Christopher's Law, offenders convicted of a criteria offence and residing in Ontario must register with their local police service within 15 days of release from custody. Where there is no custodial sentence, they must register within 15 days after being convicted of a sex offence or within 15 days of receiving an absolute or conditional discharge for a sex offence when found not criminally responsible on account of mental disorder. Offenders must also register upon changing their address or their residence status in Ontario.

The work of the registry begins at the time an offender is charged with a criteria sex offence. The police notify the offender of their duty to register when charged or convicted. The police are then responsible for ensuring that the offender's footprint or tombstone data is entered into the Ontario sex offender registry. However, this entry is done automatically if the offender is incarcerated or detained provincially.

The offender is then responsible for registering 15 days after they are convicted or released from custody. Police then verify an address of the offender once they register. The registry includes such information as name, date of birth, current address, current photograph, and sex offences for which the offender is responsible.

It's important to note that the public does not have access to the Ontario sex offender registry, but the police can make a determination under the Police Services Act to disclose information in certain circumstances.

The registry has proven to be a very useful tool for police, who regularly access it as they investigate crimes in their communities. Since the law came into effect, police services across Ontario have been doing just that. They tell us that the information provided by the sex offender registry is an invaluable tool in investigating sex crimes. That is why Ontario municipal police services and the Ontario Provincial Police access the registry, on average, 495 times per day.

In proposing changes to the law through Bill 16, we are working to make good legislation even better. We're acknowledging the progress we have made and are recognizing that there is more to do. We are grateful to the Auditor General for his thoughtful review of the sex offender registry and the important contribution he has made to our work through well-thought-out recommendations. Bill 16 represents the legislative changes we are proposing to Christopher's Law.

I need to point out that our response to the recommendations of the Auditor General is not only a legislative one. There are several areas where we are making the registry work better administratively and others where we need the collaboration of other levels of government to realize the full value of the process of sex offender registration.

I want to take some time to explain how we have gone about making changes at these levels. Christopher's Law was the first sex offender registry in Canada. As the minister pointed out, Ontario remains today the only province that has a sex offender registry. As a result of the success of the registry, the Ontario government and police agencies identified the need to establish a national sex offender registry. When the national sex offender registry was enacted on December 15, 2004, it quickly became apparent to police services that the legislation was lacking when it came to being used as a proactive investigative tool.

The benefits of Ontario's registry became even more apparent as the two registries began the process of aligning the information contained within their systems. One of the most glaring examples of the federal agency's limitations is that in Ontario, when a person is convicted of a criteria sex offence, they are automatically included in the registry; under the national sex offender registry, a judge, at the time of conviction, must order the offender onto the registry.

Since the inception of the national sex offender registry on December 15, 2004, there have been 3,679 people convicted in Ontario for a criteria sex offence. Of those, only 1,853 were ordered onto the national registry.

In response to the Auditor General's recommendation for improving the registry's usefulness in quickly identifying potential suspects, the ministry is looking at better use of other data sources. This includes sources such as Correctional Services Canada for federal offenders and the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care for offenders who are not criminally responsible.

In addition, the Ontario sex offender registry application was enhanced in December 2007, making it possible to search and/or filter data by victim, gender, age, relationship to the offender and the location of past offences. We are also developing a process with provincial corrections and provincial courts to ensure that all offender records are obtained. The Ontario sex offender registry unit has met with Correctional Services Canada to review both systems and processes.

The ministry has also been working with Correctional Services Canada to address concerns relating to data



transfer regarding federal offenders. Specifically, the ministry has been working to develop an electronic interface between Correctional Services Canada and the Ontario sex offender registry. We currently receive some information electronically from Correctional Services Canada, and we will continue to work with our federal counterparts to ensure that the necessary electronic interfaces are established.

The Auditor General noted that 95% of offenders entered onto the Ontario registry are in compliance with their obligations to report under the legislation; 95% compliance is one of the highest of all sex offender registries, but 100% would be perfect. That is the ultimate objective.

The ministry is working with its police partners to strengthen procedures and is reviewing the guidelines for tracking and follow-up of offenders. The Ontario sex offender registry is working with the RCMP, Correctional Services Canada and the National Parole Board to explore areas for greater co-operation and information-sharing, for monitoring offender movement across provincial and territorial lines.

The aim is to give police early and accurate information as to which offenders are non-compliant so they can take appropriate action to ensure compliance, develop processes to identify offenders moving into Ontario, and confirm that offenders who say they are leaving the province have in fact done so.

These are some of the many ways in which we are working to enhance the effectiveness of the Ontario sex offender registry. Bill 16 is a critical part of that endeavour. If adopted, it would require the registration of the following categories of persons: all those serving an intermittent sentence, within 15 days of conviction; and all those who are released on bail pending an appeal within 15 days of release.

It would also require police services to notify the Ontario sex offender registry forthwith if they receive a notification from a mental health facility that a person who is not criminally responsible with a detention disposition is being released from the facility unsupervised. It would require that provincial correctional facilities notify the Ontario sex offender registry of all sex offenders who are released from a correctional facility on an unescorted, temporary absence pass on the day the decision is made to grant an unescorted pass.

It would, if passed, oblige more offenders to register and, in some cases, register sooner so that police and the registry would have an accurate account of all sex offenders in the community at any given time.

This is the information they need to properly track offenders and follow up on non-compliant ones. This is the information they need to guide them in investigating sex crimes. This is the information they need to prevent a crime and help provide protection for persons who may be at risk.

We have responded to the recommendations of the Auditor General by making the required changes to our processes, to improve the effectiveness of the registry

and make it an even better tool for our law enforcement partners.

Bill 16 is the legislative response we are proposing. Its passage will realize important improvements to Christopher's Law that will make an effective investigative tool even better and so provide greater protection for Ontario communities.

1550

**Mr. Garfield Dunlop:** I am pleased to rise today to speak to Bill 16. Of course, I want to refer a lot to Bill 31, the original Christopher's Law. I thought I would just say, reading a little bit on Bill 16, An Act to amend Christopher's Law (Sex Offender Registry), 2000, that I commend the minister for bringing forward this bill after the auditor's report.

I know the parliamentary assistant has mentioned a lot of the details of the bill, but the bill "amends the act by adding the following situations that will trigger a reporting obligation: being ordered to serve a sentence for a sex offence intermittently; and being released from custody pending the determination of an appeal in relation to a sex offence.

"It also amends the act to require the following information to be added to the sex offender registry: information from a provincial correctional institution that an offender is about to be released on an unescorted temporary absence pass, and information about his or her whereabouts during the release and about the termination of the pass...."

It also includes "information from a designated hospital under Part XX.1 of the Criminal Code (Canada) that an offender who was not found criminally responsible of a sex offence on account of mental disorder is about to be released unescorted into the community."

These are obviously improvements to what we consider to be a bill that this caucus, particularly, is very, very proud of; we're proud of the history of it. I'm also proud of the fact that the Ontario sex offender registry is located at the Ontario Provincial Police headquarters in my riding. I've actually toured the facility a number of times and have met a number of the officers who have given me briefings on the processes used. I have to tell you that we're extremely proud of it.

When we refer to the Ontario sex offender registry, there's no question that it was "An Act, in memory of Christopher Stephenson, to establish and maintain a registry of sex offenders to protect children and communities." We know the history of that.

I wanted to put on the record a number of articles that appeared in the media in that period of time leading up to that. I wanted to thank the current acting leader of our party, Bob Runciman, for his role in that, former colleague in this House, former Solicitor General David Tsubouchi, and even at times David Turnbull, who played a role in it as well.

I wanted to put these articles on the record and then talk a little bit about policing and police staffing as well. At the time, in early 1999 and leading up to the tabling of Christopher's Law, this concept of a sex offender registry



drew a lot of attention right across our country because Ontario had the courage to move forward with it.

Here's an article I wanted to put on the record from the Cape Breton Post, Saturday, April 17, 1999. That was just prior to the election, when—I'll read this article—

*Interjection.*

**Mr. Garfield Dunlop:** My first election, by the way; yes, I won that year.

"Saying Ottawa has failed to keep the public safe by ignoring calls for a national sex offender registry, Ontario intends to introduce Canada's first provincial register.

"A national sex offender registry would be the most effective means of preventing unnecessary harm against the vulnerable in society," Ernie Eves, Ontario's deputy minister, told a news conference Friday.

"The federal government has chosen to ignore the recommendation; therefore, Ontario will act alone. In short, we will do the right thing." This was said by Mr. Eves.

"A law to create the registry will be introduced after the Ontario Legislature resumes April 22 and is expected to be passed before the election, likely in June.

"The legislation will be called Christopher's Law, in memory of Christopher Stephenson. The 11-year-old boy was sexually assaulted and murdered in 1988 by Joseph Fredericks, a convicted pedophile out on parole.

"Sex offenders will be required to contact police when they move to a new community and register their address. Failure to do so will result in a one-year jail term and \$25,000 fine.

"However, the list of names and addresses will only be available to police, not the public.

"Names will be made public only if police believe the offender poses a high risk to a community.

"Eves says privacy laws prevent Ontario from posting the registry on police websites, as happens in some jurisdictions in the United States." And that's something that the registry has made very clear, from my visits to the registry.

"Lawrence MacAulay, the federal Solicitor General, says Canada doesn't need a federal sex offender registry. All criminals are registered on a police database called the Canadian Police Information Centre. With consent, any member of the public can request a criminal record check.

"We do have a registry—CPIC," MacAulay said in Ottawa.

"We have addressed the problem."

"Bill Sparks, executive director of the John Howard Society of Ontario, which promotes effective responses to crime, says the type of list Ontario proposes can backfire."

The minister mentioned today that we would like to strengthen the national sex offender registry, because we do have one now, and that is something that we have to do. At times, I wonder if it wouldn't even be a concept or a possibility that the Ontario sex offender registry could actually manage the national registry for them. This goes back to the previous government, and I want to tell you

that in one of my tours to the national sex offender registry I asked the Honourable Tony Clement to come along. He wasn't really aware, and I asked him to come along for the visit and the tour. His eyes were opened as well. So I do hope in the end that the federal government will adopt a lot of the ideas and concepts that we have in the Ontario sex offender registry.

I have other articles I would like to put on the record as well, because I do want to give credit to Mr. Runciman and to Mr. Tsubouchi in particular for their work on that. It wasn't an easy task at the time.

This one comes from the Canadian Press, and it was printed throughout the country on December 9, 1999. That's after we had formed the government. I will read that as well. It's by Wendy McCann:

"Toronto (CP)—Police in Ontario will soon be able to use a province-wide registry to track pedophiles and other sex offenders who move from one community to another.

"Legislation introduced by the province Thursday"—this was introduced by Mr. Tsubouchi at the time—"would require anyone with a record of sex crimes to register with the police within 15 days of their release from custody.

"Sex offenders would also be required to update their addresses every year, or any time they move. Failure to do so, or providing false information, could result in a \$25,000 fine or up to one year in jail.

"The information would be placed in a sex offender registry, the first province-wide list of its kind in Canada, and would be made available only to police.

"David Tsubouchi, Ontario's Solicitor General, says police must know where sex offenders live to protect the public.

"The provincial government has already given local police the authority to disclose the names of sex offenders," he told the Legislature.

"The sex offender registry is one way of assuring that local police become aware of sex offenders who may move into their community."

"Tsubouchi rebuked Ottawa for not creating a national sex offender registry.

"Since it is now clear that the federal government will not accept its responsibility in this matter, Ontario will do what is right and act to protect its citizens," he said.

"The proposed legislation has been dubbed Christopher's Law, in memory of 11-year-old Christopher Stephenson, who was abducted and murdered in 1988 by a convicted pedophile on parole.

"A jury presiding over the inquest into Christopher's murder recommended more powers for police in monitoring sex offenders.

"While the boy's parents appeared in the Legislature Thursday to support the bill, they have also expressed concerns that a registry might not have saved their son.

"Critics say a registry would do little and the government should be spending more money on prevention.

"Currently, police rely on the Canadian Police Information Centre for information on a person's crim-



inal record. However, the information isn't always up to date since criminals no longer under supervision are not obliged to tell officials they have moved." It's like, why would they register a handgun?

"The bill is expected to pass before the Christmas holiday."

1600

I wanted to also mention, because we have mentioned it in so many other areas here, another story, by James McCarten of Canadian Press—again, I'm referring to Mr. Tsubouchi and Mr. Runciman.

"A boy murdered more than 10 years ago by a pedophile on parole might be alive today if there had been a provincial sex offender registry, his parents say"—and this is dated February 28, 2000.

"But as committee hearings began Monday into an Ontario government bill that would establish the first such registry in Canada, Jim and Anna Stephenson admitted they didn't come to that conclusion easily.

"'Oh, boy,' Jim sighed during a news conference. 'There's a lot of speculation that my wife and I have had on that question.'

"As recently as last year, Stephenson was publicly doubting whether a registry would have protected Christopher, who was murdered in 1988 by Joseph Fredericks, a convicted pedophile.

"But he has since decided that the legislation, dubbed Christopher's Law, would have given his then 11-year-old son a better chance of survival.

"'I believe that had the legislation been in place, we would have had a better opportunity to locate Christopher's abductor,' Stephenson said.

"'It may have saved his life. I really believe that.'

"Under the bill, which passed first reading in December, convicted sex offenders would have to register their address with police when they move to a new community.

"Failure to do so would result in a one-year jail term and \$25,000 fine.

"But Brian Enns, a spokesman for the Mennonite Central Committee rights advocacy group, said a registry is a waste of money that likely would not have prevented Christopher's death.

"It would merely duplicate the powers of the courts, which can already keep close tabs on offenders if necessary, Enns told the hearings.

"'People who know Joseph Fredericks believe a registry would not have prevented Christopher's murder,' he said.

"'Police knew Fredericks's place of residence without the proposed registry, and today the courts could require him to report to the police daily.'

"Solicitor General David Tsubouchi said he hopes Ontario's plan serves as a 'wake-up call' to prod Ottawa into establishing a federal system for tracking offenders.

"'There is a real need to have a national sex offender registry,' Tsubouchi said.

"'We are trying to do this right now to address the protection of public safety in Ontario, but we need to

have this type of important vehicle for all police services across the country.'

"The registry would bear the names of about 2,200 offenders annually from Ontario provincial courts, Tsubouchi said.

"Enns said he also fears that registries would discourage offenders from trying to become respectable members of society.

"Steve Sullivan, president of the Canadian Resource Centre for Victims of Crime, recommended the registry include young offenders convicted of sex crimes as well as solicitors of child prostitutes."

So you can see that as we have gone through this process, there were some people who were naysayers on this particular registry.

But overall, if you talk to police services across our country, I think one thing they'll tell you for sure is that Christopher's Law, or the Ontario sex offender registry, is a model for any sex offender registry anywhere in North America. So from our perspective in this caucus, we are very proud of the fact that we've had the fortitude and the ability under legislation to start it, and will be very pleased to support the recommendations made by the auditor and presented in legislation to this House by Minister Bartolucci.

I do want to say, though, that as we were talking about—and this is where I'm going to make some comments the minister is not going to like. You have to admit, I've been very positive up to this date on this. We are very proud of Christopher's Law and really want to put that on the record today, and that's why I had those clippings from across the country, from 1999 and 2000. We believe that if it's a bill that's already good and we're improving it, then it's got to be pretty good for public safety in our province.

What I wanted to refer to now was the fact that all through this process or all through this legislation over the last eight or 10 years, we've been calling for a stronger national sex offender registry and working with the federal government on that, and I still hope we can do that. I'm still hoping we can strengthen the national registry and work with the federal government on it.

As you know, the federal government has come to the table on another topic, and that's the \$156 million that they're providing for resources to hire new police officers. I believe the original platform document that Mr. Harper put on the record a couple of years ago—I guess it's going back 30 months now—was to hire 2,500 new police officers or create a kick-start program that would have that take place. Ontario's share would be roughly 1,000 of those officers.

I was pleased that the federal budget, back in February, had allocated \$156 million to the province of Ontario. Although I know that a couple of weeks ago the minister didn't like the program, just recently—I believe it was last week—the Premier made an announcement that they were signed on, I believe, to three additional federal programs and that the money would flow by the



end of February. So my understanding is that the money should be in some kind of trust account early this month.

I'm hoping that this is what will happen, and I want to put it on the record to my colleagues and the minister, because I believe this is the way we can make it happen: I didn't see any money in the budget for this, but in year one, which is 2008-09, this particular year, I would like to see Ontario hire 200 additional officers, with 100 of those going to the OPP. That would take \$10 million out of the federal contribution and \$10 million out of the provincial. All these assumptions are based on the fact that it costs roughly \$100,000, or maybe even a little bit more than that, to put an officer on the street or on the highway. So at the end of year one, we would spend a total of \$20 million: \$10 million from the province and \$10 million from the feds.

In year two, because you're duplicating the first 200 police officers, we'd have to put in 20 million federal dollars and 20 million provincial dollars, for a total of \$40 million. That would put in 400 officers: 200 officers to the OPP and 200 officers to other police services within our province.

In year three, we'd take \$30 million out of the federal contribution and \$30 million from the Ontario government, for a total of \$60 million, and that would give us 600 police officers: 300 to the OPP and 300 to other police services.

In year four, we'd go to \$40 million, and in year five, we'd go to \$50 million. In year five, we'd end up with 1,000 police officers: 500 to the Ontario Provincial Police—to the non-municipal contract policing division—and 500 to other police services. At the end of five years, that would be a total of \$150 million of the federal money and \$150 million out of the provincial coffers that we would spend. So a total of roughly \$300 million, with that money being compounded throughout the process, would put 1,000 new officers on the streets.

The previous Conservative government—in the 1999 platform, we put 1,000 new officers on the streets of Ontario. The Liberal government, under their 1,000 officers program, added another 1,000 police officers. We were pleased to be part of that, because I believe that we, on this side of the House at least, pressured the government on a number of occasions to move forward with that program. I know that a lot of people from police services have come forward and thanked me for our questions in the House and for attending press conferences and that sort of thing. They were pleased with both the government and the opposition that they ended up with those 1,000 new officers. Now we've got another 1,000 officers to go after, and we can use all of that \$156 million.

I know that the problem the minister found with the program was that it wasn't sustainable for periods of time after that. The challenge we have in this House is to put those 1,000 officers on the street. In the meantime, as we move forward with whomever is in government in Ottawa, we negotiate with the federal government for a review at the end of that period, and hopefully the federal

government will have put some sustainable money to go another five or 10 years, or whatever it may be.

**1610**

I want to say on this occasion that I'm very pleased and thankful for Karl Walsh, the president of the OPPA. He has kept me in touch with all this data. Karl has been an advocate for these additional 500 officers for the OPP for at least the last 18 to 20 months. He believes strongly in his association. There are a number of areas in the OPP—traffic etc; and perhaps the sex offender registry—from where you can move officers into Project P, child pornography. There are a number of areas where we can use 1,000 new officers. I really hope that, as a result of the federal announcement and requirements like Bill 16, the amendment to Christopher's Law, where we'll likely need additional resources and numbers of people, we can carry forward and utilize those additional officers throughout the Ontario Provincial Police organization.

I'm sure the other municipal police services, by the time the five years rolls around, will be requiring additional police services, with increase, in population and demands and other legislation etc. that may come forward. So I'm hoping that that can actually happen.

Can we afford this? I'm not sure. I think that when you hear about young people being gunned down in schools, people being shot in the vestibule of an apartment building, or some of the crimes we've seen happen, particularly in the summer of 2005-06, when so many people lost their lives, and it was beaten last year with, I believe, 90 homicides in the city of Toronto, we have an obligation to provide those police services with the help they need.

There is no question; we must have the money. If you look at the money we spend—I heard a question that you, Madam Speaker, asked today on child welfare and money that was being allocated to children's programs. In this House, in the last five years, we've increased spending by \$29 billion. That's \$29 billion, which is a 41% increase in overall spending. Let's say there are 13 million Ontarians—13 million people who live in our province. That means that in that period of time every man, woman and child in this province has had to find another \$2,230, if you are basing it on per year—every man, woman and child per year, \$2,230 in increased expenditures by the Ontario government. That works out to \$440 to \$450 per year. So if you are a family of four under the Dalton McGuinty government you've watched that government spend roughly \$2,000 per year. So there should be money for additional police officers. When we're talking about \$29 billion, surely we can find \$156 million to put another 500 OPP officers on the streets and take part in the federal program.

We will be watching very carefully how that money is allocated. We would like to see it start immediately, like money going out the door this year to hire a couple of hundred officers this year in Ontario, and not leaving the money to year three, or year four, election year, and rolling out a fancy announcement. We would like to see the officers in the OPP uniforms this year and even better for



next year, because next year is the 100th anniversary of the Ontario Provincial Police in the province of Ontario. There'll be announcements and celebrations. It would really be nice to show that our government and this Parliament strengthened the OPP with the number of officers they require, and helped them in a very positive manner as they move towards the second century of their existence in our great province.

I have still got 20 minutes left. I'm not going to use all that time up today. I'm not even going to leave it all for my colleague, who wants to say a few words either, because I think I've made my point here.

In summary, what I want to say is that we support this bill; we support the amendments. We'll look forward to a quick passage of it, if we have it. I'm not sure if we're having a day of hearings or not at this point; I'm hoping we are. That would be good because we can bring some of those stakeholders in to comment on how successful Christopher's Law has been and how well they feel the amendments will improve the bill.

On top of that—I am sincere. I don't mean to do this in a partisan manner, but I really do hope we can go after that \$156 million and utilize it into 500 officers for the OPP and the police services. Again, we'll be working closely with our police stakeholders to make sure that we try to make that happen.

I'll now turn it over to my colleague Mr. Arnott, who has a few comments he'd like to make on this bill. I thank you for your attention.

**Mr. Ted Arnott:** I am pleased to have this opportunity to speak briefly this afternoon with respect to Bill 16. And, yes, the member for Simcoe North informed the House that I was going to have this chance and I am pleased he did.

I want to congratulate the member for Simcoe North for the outstanding speech he gave this afternoon, as well as the good work that he does on behalf of our caucus as our critic for the Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services. I think it's fitting that he serves in this capacity given the fact that his riding includes the headquarters of the Ontario Provincial Police in Orillia, and his long-demonstrated interest in policing issues and the issues that he's brought forward on many occasions.

I'm pleased that the member for Welland is going to be back shortly, because he's going to have to speak very soon. I'm not going to hold the floor for the next 20 minutes, just to let him know.

Seriously, this Bill 16 is an important bill, and I'm pleased to know that our caucus is going to support it. I certainly wanted to support it, and believe that our caucus will be behind the government with respect to this issue.

The member for Simcoe North talked about how the Progressive Conservative Party, while in government, brought forward Christopher's Law around 1999. It was in response, as we know, to a terrible tragedy that took place in 1988 with the tragic murder of an 11-year-old boy, Christopher Stephenson, at the hand of a convicted pedophile who was out of jail on a federal statutory release. After the coroner's inquest into Christopher's

death, the coroner's jury recommended creating a sex registry or a national registry for convicted sex offenders, requiring that they register with their local police service as soon as they were released from jail. The intent was that if convicted sex offenders travelled around the country, we would be able to keep track of them, know their whereabouts and hopefully make our streets safer as a result.

My wife and I have three young sons. My oldest is going to be 13 this summer, my middle child is going to be 11 this summer and our youngest just turned nine. I just cannot imagine the tragedy that the Stephenson family went through. I don't think any of us who have never lost a child could even fathom what that family went through. I think it's important that we keep that in mind in the future in terms of what we can do as a Legislature, what the government of Ontario can do, what the Ontario Provincial Police can do, and our court system, what we must do to respond to our basic obligation with respect to community safety. Keeping our community safe, our streets and our homes safe has to be one of the government's highest priorities. This Bill 16 hopefully will be a step in the right direction in that regard.

Let's go back for a minute to remember why Bill 16 has been brought forward. It comes in response to recommendations from the Auditor General. It was a little while ago that the Auditor General pointed out some of the problems that were in place because of the deficiencies in the application of the existing sex registry. The Auditor General informed the people of Ontario and the Legislature that 365 provincial sex offenders who should have been registered were not on the list and 360 federal sex offenders who should have been registered were not.

Nine million dollars in funds that were supposed to be going into the sex registry had been diverted elsewhere.

We were told that there was no reliable reporting mechanism to ensure that all offenders living in Ontario were registered on release from federal correctional facilities. The Auditor General pointed out that there was no process in place for ensuring that young offenders who receive adult sentences would be registered.

We were told that local police follow-up procedures, for the 384 non-compliant offenders who did not register or do not re-register annually, vary widely. We were told that almost 70 of the unregistered offenders had been in breach of the act for more than two years. We were informed by the Auditor General that warrants were not consistently being issued for offenders in breach of the act for extended periods.

**1620**

Further, we were informed that the \$9 million in funding approved for registry operations was spent on other operational areas, not the sex registry. At the same time, we were told that the sex offender registry unit lacked the resources to complete a number of planned system corrections and enhancements. We were told that there are a number of limitations in the registry tools available to investigators that inhibit searches through the list of 7,400 registered offenders in the database. In other



words, there was no method of searching data on the basis of the sex and age of an offender's victim, the relationship between the victim and the offender, or the location of the crime. We were also told that the registry records did not always capture all offender information required under the act that would be useful to investigators. In other words, no photographs on file for 140 offenders, more than 1,200 records had no detailed case information, and in some cases, police were never able to verify the residential addresses of nearly 650 offenders.

I believe we owe a debt of gratitude to the Auditor General for bringing these issues to light, and I think that it's incumbent upon the government to ensure that it responds to each and every one of these serious issues that had been highlighted by the Auditor General. I'm not sure that Bill 16 responds to every single one of those recommendations. I see the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services nodding his head to say that that is the case. I certainly hope it is.

I'm pleased to hear that the government is willing to allow this bill to go to committee for at least one day of hearings. I think it's important, if individuals and groups have an interest in this and want to come forward and express their views to members of the Legislature, that they be given that opportunity to do so. I know, even recently—I've got a clipping here from the North Bay Nugget from just last week, I guess; March 25—the commissioner of the OPP, Julian Fantino, talks about some of the deficiencies in the national sex registry. He certainly has a lot to say about this, and had a lot to say at the time.

I think we should hear the views of everyone who has an interest in this issue, who wants to ensure that this mechanism that we have for public safety is improved to ensure that our streets are safe, our communities are safer, that we would give people that opportunity to have that say. I think it's most important that we do so.

Again, I would express my feeling that it's appropriate that our caucus is supportive of this bill, and I'm pleased that we are going to be supporting it. I do have a high personal regard for the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services and the work that he does. I want to commend him for bringing this forward today. We certainly look forward to continuing to discuss it as it moves through the Legislature.

But once again, Madam Speaker, thank you very much for giving me this opportunity this afternoon. I look forward to the rest of the debate on Bill 16.

**Mr. Peter Kormos:** New Democrats have agreed that this bill should be put to a vote after this afternoon's sessional day of second reading debate. We further argue that the bill—and it appears that there is some significant agreement around this—should go to committee. I will make sure it goes to committee because I will, of course, deny its progress to third reading unless and until it goes to committee, by simply saying no when the minister, after this bill passes second reading—and I presume it will pass this afternoon—moves it for third reading.

We don't limit our participation in the debate in any way, shape or form, because we diminish the seriousness

of the bill or the issue that it purports to address. Quite frankly, I have no idea how much public interest there will be in public hearings.

Let's make it very, very clear. New Democrats supported the sex offender registry back in 2000. In fact, as a member of that committee, I recall making proposals and moving amendments in an effort to toughen it up. Why, one of the obvious observations—and it's regrettably still one of the shortfalls of the legislation and perhaps one that can't be overcome because of the limited jurisdiction of the province—is that young offender sex offenders aren't included on the registry.

Let's make this perfectly clear. I'm not trying to create or paint an image of some little kid who does something inappropriate that he or she regrets and then moves on to become a mature adult. I'm talking about 16- or 17-year-olds who are adult in every sense of the physical world—nobody is going to argue that they're adults emotionally—who are rapists, who are child molesters, who are very dangerous people in our community. These people, you've got to understand, are not on the sex offender registry.

Back in 2000, there was also an interesting failure to put people on the sex offender registry or require people to place themselves on the registry when their convictions had occurred prior to the passage of the legislation. I found that absolutely nuts, because that means we don't know how many rapists and pedophiles there are in Ontario who are never going to be compelled to register on the sex offender registry.

The interesting dilemma, I'm sure, for the counsel to the government was the need to make sure that the requirement to put oneself on the registry if you were convicted of those lists of offences—basically, sexual offences—wasn't punitive, because there would be people who would argue then that that would be ultra vires, as lawyers are wont to say, of the provincial government.

Let's be clear here. While the sex offender registry is a tool for police officers, it is also a very dramatic way for a society to denounce a particular type of behaviour, beyond the manner in which we confront, punish, condemn or denounce other types of aberrant or even criminal behaviour. There's not a single person in this Legislature—and a person would be a damn fool to suggest there was anybody here who isn't repulsed and just shocked every time we read about a horrific offence, especially against a child or another vulnerable resident of the province. There's something especially repugnant, because it's our job to protect kids—not as a Legislature; I'm talking as adults, as people, as human beings. It's our job to protect kids, not just our own and not just our families' kids or our neighbours' kids, but kids whom we don't even know. It's our job to protect them.

It's also our job to protect seniors, to protect persons with disabilities. That's why you'll note some new offences in the Criminal Code that talk about a sexual offence against a person with a disability, recognizing that



some people with disabilities become vulnerable because of their personal reality.

I think we have to be candid and acknowledge that this is not just an investigative tool for police; it's also a way that the provincial Legislature, with its unique jurisdiction separate and apart from the federal government, can express denunciation of sexual offences and, in particular, sexual offences against the vulnerable—which means, amongst others, sexual offences against children.

As a matter of fact, this is the proverbial scarlet letter, and indeed this type of legislation in the United States is referred to as “scarlet-letter legislation.” There's been a whole growth of it; it goes back to the 1940s in the United States, in California, where, amongst other things, it was used in particular to persecute gays and lesbians who, of course, if they were caught in a situation where they were committing a crime of the day, had to report and identify themselves as sex offenders; it destroyed many a life.

So these scarlet-letter laws—the notification laws they're referred to as well—are a tool for police, as well as an effective means for us, representing our communities, to denounce especially repugnant behaviour.

1630

But let's also be very clear about the fact that this registry, even after the amendments contained in Bill 16, is not going to be the proverbial silver bullet.

The Auditor General, in his 2007 report, was very specific in pointing out that—well, I'll quote. May I, Speaker, with your permission? Indulge me for just a moment. I'm referring to the Auditor General's report, page 272:

“Even though sex offender registries have existed for many years and can consume significant public resources, we found surprisingly little evidence that demonstrates their effectiveness in actually reducing sexual crimes or helping investigators solve them, and few attempts to demonstrate such effectiveness. This has not gone unnoticed by critics of sex offender registries, some of whom argue that public funds would be better spent on offender treatment and support programs where there has been some documented proof of effectiveness in reducing recidivism (that is, the committing of another crime by an offender after being released).”

I can't argue with that observation; I don't think anybody here can. But I'll say this to you: In many respects an incomplete sex offender registry is more dangerous than no registry at all. It's like the gun registry, if you will. If police officers rely on the gun registry and the gun registry isn't accurate, they then can perhaps attend at a home or place believing there are no firearms there, only to be dangerously surprised by the presence of firearms. If police rely on a sex offender registry that's incomplete, they could well be missing the very person who has perpetrated or committed an offence.

The problem with the sex offender registry is that even when it's complete, based on the legislation, it's still not going to be complete. We still don't have sex offenders predating passage of the legislation, and there surely are

more than a few of them out there. We still don't have young offenders, and we also have the interesting exclusion of people who have passed the time frame of 10 years, those being people who have committed certain types of sexual offences. You see, the registry only compels people, as convicted persons, to register for a period of 10 years if the offence for which they have been convicted is one with a maximum penalty of less than 10 years. The fact is that a whole pile of sexual offences are punishable by less than 10 years.

I'll give you an example: Sexual assault is an offence which is punishable by less than 10 years. Other similar and equally repugnant offences can be ones that are punishable by less than 10 years. This means that a huge group of persons will have been convicted of sexual offences but will only be required to report on an annual basis for a period of 10 years following their conviction. Some may argue that there could well be circumstances where a person has rehabilitated himself or herself, has matured, grown, undergone therapy or made significant changes. I suppose it all depends on which class of sexual offenders you really want to be looking at.

Let's be fair and talk about when a sex offender registry is particularly valuable. A sex offender registry is particularly valuable when you are talking about a child who has been abducted by a pervert. The information that we gleaned from the public hearings back in 2000 or so was illuminating in that regard, and the Auditor General includes the same references in his report. If a kid, a child, is abducted for sexual purposes, 44% of those children are killed, murdered, within one hour of being abducted; 91% within 24 hours. This is the most cogent and significant argument for a sex offender registry of any sort, because police have to move very, very quickly. This isn't television drama; this is real life. This is data. This is hard, irrefutable facts. If you're a parent and your child is missing from its bedroom, the chance of that child being killed within an hour of disappearing is 44%, and after but one day, 24 hours, 91%. The hair raises on my arms as I even acknowledge that data. What a shocking observation and reality. It's something the police have to live with. That's why the sex offender registry can be a very important tool.

Obviously, a sex offender registry can be a valuable tool when you're talking about rapists—colloquially called serial rapists, repeat rapists. It enables the police to identify those people who have raped and been convicted before.

But the other observation made about sexual offenders is that most sexual offenders, upon their first conviction, are rarely being convicted for their first offence, especially people who prey on children. Again, all of us have read far too much or been exposed to it in our own communities, our own neighbourhoods, or in our own families, to learn about the pedophile who manipulates, who first seduces a mother, more often than not a single-parent mom. The pedophile seduces the mother—we're not talking about the jump-out-of-the-bushes or abductor pedophile—and then seduces the children. These are



clever, manipulative people. They don't intend to get caught. None of these people intend to get caught.

So while on the one hand the sex offender registry is a valuable tool in identifying people who have been convicted, it doesn't embrace all of those people who fall into the class of persons who commit these types of offences. But the police know that. I am in no way criticizing the police, I'm just cautioning us, because this is the sort of legislation that nobody could not support. New Democrats are going to vote for it in just a very short period of time, but let's understand that this is not the final word in protecting our kids from some of those most horrendous of crimes, despicable and unspeakable crimes.

It was interesting as well—and I appreciate that some have wanted to frame Bill 16 in the context of being a response to the Auditor General. It's a very limited response to the wide range of concerns that the Auditor General expressed. One of the concerns that the Auditor General talked about was the inability when accessing the registry to filter the information, the data; that is, to not just identify persons but identify them in terms of, let's say, profiles like age or gender, or sex of victims, and some suggestion that there is a capacity to do it with respect to geography. Because, once again, this is what the research says, and this is the one filter that was incorporated: 80% of abductions of kids occur within a quarter mile of the victim's last known location, usually by offenders who live or work in the area or had some other legitimate reason to be there. So the impression we get is that child abductors who kill children don't travel too far afield.

1640

One of the serious problems that we have in this province, of course, is that most offenders convicted of most crimes, including sexual offences, get out of jail at one point or another. From the point of view of the public, it's almost inevitably sooner rather than later. I used to be, you might recall, a criminal lawyer many years ago. I did a lot, a lot, a lot of criminal work. There were times when I believed there should only be two types of jail sentences, short ones or very long ones, because for people who are basically good people who do bad things or whose judgment fails them, even a week in jail tunes them up. They're never going to go back again. But if a week in jail doesn't tune you up, a month ain't going to either, nor six months. So I believe that jail sentences, and this is just a passing fancy, just an observation, should either be for specific deterrence—in other words, "This is what happens when you're bad. You are deprived of your liberty; you're in a stinky range with people who don't wash their feet very often and do other things," and it's a very unpleasant experience. Have you ever been in any of our provincial jails? The bloody rock music that's blaring through the speakers is punishment enough. I don't know how the correctional officers—that should be a health and safety issue, the music that they have to listen to, because inmates tend to be of the age group and profile that they want to listen to heavy metal

or Metallica or whatever it is. Good God. I couldn't last, never mind as an inmate, but as a worker, in that context for half an hour. So as I say, either you're sending a message to an offender or you're protecting society.

We know that treatment programs for pedophiles are few and far between and have very marginal success. There's a hard-wiring that goes on there. All sorts of good, well-meaning people have worked really hard, including offenders from time to time, who have been very committed to therapy programs to try to overcome this bizarre hard-wiring. It's very, very difficult, very tough. The success rate is limited. That's what drives people crazy. You will recall that the boy whose murder prompted this legislation was killed by an offender on parole. He hadn't even finished his sentence; he was still on parole. But you see, the problem with even saying, "Well, don't give these people parole," is that at some point or another, unless we get courts and unless we have a criminal law that's going to—again, we have dangerous-offender legislation, and I know we've had discussions here, and I've urged the Attorney General to be more aggressive in pursuing it when it has been appropriate. Sentences have to be proportionate to the crime, and the Criminal Code still regards some of these offences, especially against children, as warranting even summary conviction standards.

So that leads you to a couple of obvious observations: first, the incredible dilemma that any of us have in our community when a sex offender, especially one who preys on women or kids, is returned to the community. Of course, sooner or later word leaks out and then all hell breaks loose and our offices get called, right? They call your constituency office; they call your constituency office; they call yours.

One of the real issues is in the availability of supervised housing for offenders, especially offenders like sex offenders, who are released. The police then are in a position where they have to concern themselves with vigilantism, and the police don't like being put in that position. Neighbourhoods are genuinely, bona fide fearful for their kids, and rightly so. But, as you know, we lost a whole lot of the community housing programs—John Howard-sponsored, amongst others—for offenders back over the course of the last 10, 11, 12 years. We've had limited restoration of them, if any.

The other issue is the paucity of meaningful treatment programs in our provincial and federal institutions. Let me talk just for a minute about the broad range of offenders. Again, you go to provincial institutions—I've had many occasions to be in and out of them over the course of many decades now—and the programs are virtually non-existent: job training programs, shop programs and the academic programs are pretty bare-bones stuff. The therapeutic approaches are, again, sort of by chance. So at the same time as we need a sex offender registry that's as complete as it can possibly be, we'd better start thinking about more meaningful—look, you've got to cap the volume, so to speak, don't you? These people ain't goin' nowhere.



In some of the provincial institutions I've been in, they aren't doing very much either. They're lying on their bunks, reading bad novels. They're not smoking Bugler; do you remember Bugler tobacco? They're not smoking Bugler tobacco or Daily Mail anymore because you can't smoke in these joints. But they're lying on their bunks, reading bad novels—the ones that can read. You don't have to spend very long in a provincial institution, looking at guys and gals serving six-month, nine-month, one-year sentences, to find incredibly high illiteracy rates, disproportionately high rates of mental illness and low, low education. I'm talking about the wide range of offenders now; I'm not talking about offenders that are contemplated by this sex offender registry—many people, victims, men and women.

I used to work a lot with prostitutes, sex trade workers, when I was a defence counsel. Contrary to what the mayor of Niagara Falls says, they did work in Niagara Falls then, just as they do now. I wouldn't have been defending them down in Niagara if they hadn't. But again, I was amazed at how many of these women had been victims of violent sexual assaults, most often from family members, as children. That's not a hard bit of data or a hard statistic, but it's something I can say to you anecdotally, if you will.

We're missing the boat. We can bitch and moan and complain about sentences not being long enough, but unless we're prepared to have some really dramatic, radical—and the prospect of banishment. I, for one, believe that certain types of offences that are not the result of rational choice, but are the result of just very defective hard wiring—that results in children being sexually exploited, sexually abused, sexually assaulted or sexually assaulted and killed. I, for one, think that the welfare of our kids should be prioritized. I, for one, am inclined to believe we should be adopting sentences that effectively constitute banishment from participating in the mainstream community so that we can ensure that children are not at risk.

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I'm not arguing against proportionality of sentencing and I'm not talking about the 17-year-old kid who is inappropriate after he gets all drunk up—I guess he's too young to get all drunk up; Lord knows they don't drink at 17—and does something very inappropriate with a young woman or whatever at a teenage event. So that's one of the other problems here. That captures a whole range of people. It captures these vicious, despicable predators who have to be identified promptly, but it also means that the teenager who conducts himself inappropriately—I'm being too generous. Am I going to get e-mails about this? Am I going to get people complaining? There were all sorts of phrases, that we used when I was a teenager, involving baseball metaphors like “first base” and “second base.” These things happen. Again, because of the concern that we have and, quite frankly, the political-correctness environment we live in, these prosecutors—crown attorneys—are forced or compelled to prosecute these as well.

The corresponding problem—and it would be increasingly rare where children are involved—is the phenomenon of plea bargaining. I'm hard pressed to think of a crown attorney—the crown attorney would be calling the deputy minister, because he or she wouldn't want to take responsibility him or herself before they plea bargained away a serious offence involving a child, unless it was their only possible hope of a conviction.

Not all plea bargains result because of the informal quota system that exists in our courtrooms and the heavy backlogs. Some plea bargains result because the crown attorney has a very limited chance of conviction, and has no choice but to accept a lesser plea, or else they may end up with nothing at all. Quite frankly, in cases of child victims, where from time to time you don't want to put a child through, notwithstanding the protections provided for child witnesses, sometimes crowns are forced to make some pretty difficult choices; they are. But you see, then that offender shows up on the registry perhaps entirely inappropriately, not being in the class of offence that she or he could be or should be.

So here we are. I'm looking forward to going to committee with this. Thank you very much to the library; they pulled the previous amendments to the original act. I can't find, and maybe somebody can rise to the occasion here: The act still refers to the Young Offenders Act, and I don't see any amendment in Bill 16 that changes it to the Youth Criminal Justice Act, which of course it should be. I'm not aware of there having been, but maybe there has been, an amendment to that effect already in some omnibus bill.

Well, no, here we are: In 2006, Bryant has an amendment that repeats the reference to the Young Offenders Act. What do we have here? Oh, Youth Criminal Justice Act. Thank goodness, okay. I was looking forward to the opportunity to hector the Solicitor General in committee for overlooking the most obvious of amendments.

I've got to tell you that I also have some problem with the immunity clause here. The immunity clause, which is prevalent in most government legislation now, is repeated, cleaned up in terms of renaming the minister. The only thing I can think of that's worse than committing an offence that's contemplated by this registry is not to have committed the offence and then be wrongly convicted of it. Can you think of anything more repugnant or shocking? Then go one further, and the only thing that could be more repugnant than a wrongful conviction would be to be wrongly placed on the list. My concern about immunity clauses—they're omnipresent in government legislation. You understand what I'm talking about; it precludes you from suing. If you're wrongly placed on the list, it precludes you from suing.

Let's understand what it means if you're on the list. It means that when a crime happens, the cops move promptly and start looking for you and talking to your neighbours. Talk about the scarlet letter; wham, whack. I'm concerned about this general trend by governments to create these immunity provisions. I quite frankly think that if somebody is wrongly placed on a list like this,



even if the person putting them there acted in good faith, heads should roll and there should be some accountability.

So there we are. I'm not going to use all of my time today. This is a matter that should now move on to committee. One other thing I wanted to mention now, though, is the business of pardons. Of course, once a person receives a pardon under the official pardons act, the federal legislation—I think the National Parole Board administers those—you then trot down to the police station and have your name pulled off the registry.

Look, once again, we're not talking about the 17-year-old kid who does a technical sexual assault—and don't send me e-mails saying there's no such thing as just a technical sexual assault; you know exactly what I'm talking about—and gets a pardon down the road, just like the kid who smokes dope and then gets a pardon. Come on, if having a record for smoking marijuana were a bar to future life, heck, what would happen in this chamber? Nobody here has ever violated the old Narcotic Control Act, or does currently, I'm sure. I'm not talking about the kid who does something inappropriate and is charged with a very minor sexual assault, who is probably entitled to a pardon if he or she has kept their nose clean.

Take a look at the auditor's report, on page 264, and take a look at the number of purges from the sex registry. There were deletions totalling 732. What gives? Either you were convicted of something that was serious enough to ring alarm bells to put you on the sex offender registry or you weren't. Either you did it or you didn't. If people have their convictions overturned, they're not guilty. But that causes me concern because I don't know what standards the National Parole Board uses when they process applications for pardons. In many respects it's a very pro forma, routine procedure. And, again, our offices deal with these, even though they're federal matters. You know provincial MPPs end up doing more federal work than the federal members do. Federal members just disappear. They get the big bucks. They just disappear. They're never in town.

*Interjection.*

**Mr. Peter Kormos:** Well, they're never in town. Do people come to our offices for pardon applications and assistance in filling them out? You bet your boots. And do we do it? You bet your boots we do. So I'm concerned; I really am.

In anticipation of those hearings, I would hope that the Solicitor General, the ministry, would get some information on what standards the National Parole Board—if in fact that's the body that grants pardons, and I'm sure it is—uses when it comes to the offences that are enumerated in Ontario sex offender registry legislation. Is it a pretty simple matter? If it's been 10 years or eight years or five years and there have been no more convictions, as it is with so many other offences, do you just get the pardon? Then I'm concerned about the integrity of the sex offender registry and how helpful it really is to cops who are looking for the perpetrator of a crime. We have 732, according to the auditor, from 2001 through to 2002

through to 2007; so in the course of approximately six years, over 100 a year struck off the registry. Again, as I say, if they were wrongly put there, I understand. If their convictions were overturned, I understand. If they were pardons, I'd like to know what the standard was for the National Parole Board to pardon those offenders convicted of sexual offences.

So what am I concerned about? I'm going to wrap up. I'm concerned about people who have committed offences and, of course, who have never been caught. They're never going to be on the registry. And they're out there, model sexual predators—very clever, very manipulative, very skilful people who know the law. They don't intend to get caught. Most of the data supports the proposition that where a person is being prosecuted and convicted for a sexual offence—when we're talking about pedophilia and serial rapists, that type of behaviour—it's the rare case where it's their first offence.

Two: Young offenders, especially of the higher tier, 16- and 17-year-olds, who go to YO court. They're not skinny little childlike people. These are the big biceps and the tattoos and the whole nine yards. Nothing against biceps or tattoos, I suppose—but the fact that they're not on the sex offender registry.

Three: The cap of 10 years without any discretion on the part of the person deleting the name from the sex offender registry. Once again, an offence against a child, when it's pedophilia, is more likely than not going to be a part of hard-wiring. All the growing up in the world isn't going to change the motivation and the drive that that person has to assault children.

And, of course the ability for the police to use filters so they can put data together at a rapid rate.

I'm going to leave it at that. I look forward to the committee hearings. People have talked about one day. I don't know; one day may be the only need there is. There may be no interest from people out there in terms of participating in hearings. There's nobody who's going to be motivated or driven to protract hearings on this issue. But my thought is that the committee should be entitled to control its process. The committee should announce hearings once it's ready to do that, and see what type of response there is in terms of interest in the hearings.

I would hope that people like John Howard and others who have historically run halfway houses and community-based housing might be interested. I would hope people who are involved in the treatment of pedophilia and other similar disorders might be interested. I would hope that we would solicit information, advice, help and support from some expertise in other jurisdictions that have similarly scarlet-letter or notification legislation.

I would also hope that there would be some awareness, some consciousness of the fact, the tragic fact—we only deal with this after the fact—that somebody is a victim, a kid has been molested, or a woman has been raped, or a kid has been murdered, before we move on this.

We had better start thinking far more proactively about how we identify people who are at risk of this type

of behaviour—I'm not talking about the victims; I'm talking about perpetrators—because there's some evidence to indicate that the signs start to reveal themselves at relatively immature ages. So we'd better start talking about ways of really protecting kids, rather than simply dealing with the perpetrator after the fact. One hour, 24 hours, 44%, 91%: Those aren't very good odds for kids in our society.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath):** Further debate?

There being no further debate, Mr. Bartolucci has moved second reading of Bill 16. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carries? Carried.

*Second reading agreed to.*

**Hon. Rick Bartolucci:** I ask that the bill be referred to the standing committee on justice policy.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath):** So referred.

**Hon. Rick Bartolucci:** I move adjournment of the House.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath):** Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

The motion having carried, this House now stands adjourned until 10 o'clock, Thursday, April 3.

*The House adjourned at 1703.*



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**Thursday 3 April 2008**

**Jeudi 3 avril 2008**

Speaker  
Honourable Steve Peters

Président  
L'honorable Steve Peters

Clerk  
Deborah Deller

Greffière  
Deborah Deller



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# LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Thursday 3 April 2008

# ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 3 avril 2008

*The House met at 1000.  
Prayers.*

## PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

### POVERTY PAUVRETÉ

**Ms. Sophia Aggelonitis:** Mr. Speaker, I'd like to thank you for the opportunity to move this resolution today, which reads:

That, in the opinion of this House, the Legislative Assembly of Ontario affirm that an effective plan for a strong economy must include setting targets for, and investing in, poverty reduction.

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier):** Pursuant to standing order 96, you have up to 10 minutes.

**Ms. Sophia Aggelonitis:** Many have experienced or witnessed poverty on some level. I think we could all agree that we need to continue working together to reduce poverty across the province. We need our people at their best, and we therefore have a shared responsibility to help lower poverty levels across the province.

Living below the poverty line is not something that a child has the option of choosing. As residents of this province, we need to protect our children and continue working towards lowering poverty levels. Poor children come from poor families. This simple fact is something we need to be reminded of when building a plan to tackle poverty.

My message today is about creating opportunity, building on what we've already done and continuing to work together. Our government has established a poverty reduction strategy, the first of its kind, with a strict timeline for results. Led by the Honourable Deb Matthews, the cabinet committee on poverty reduction has been diligent in uncovering and bringing to the forefront the issue of poverty today. I respect the hard work that has been done, and I look forward to hearing the recommendations at the end of the year. Great work has been done, but we will do more.

I have talked to many people who are currently living below the poverty line. Specifically, I've had the opportunity to speak to many strong women who find themselves in challenging times. Let me tell you about one such woman. I spoke to her again yesterday to get an up-

date on her situation. This is a strong woman who had to go on Ontario Works to survive. She had everything, and then she had nothing. But here is what has happened. She found a job that she loves and was able to start over. She said to me that she's hopeful and happy that the government has recognized the urgency to deal with poverty. "This is a step in the right direction," she said.

These women need help; their children need help. I'm proud to be a part of a government that is hearing the voices of these individuals. In three out of four of the last provincial budgets, we have seen increased social assistance rates. This government has recognized that help is needed and will continue to build on the progress already made.

As this government has said and has proven, we are committed to investing in people. To assist women in helping them get out of poverty, we must provide them with the necessary tools. Investing in education and providing training programs for women will go a long way towards helping them achieve success. These women and their children deserve every opportunity possible, and we need to continue to provide support to them. Women make up a disproportionate share of the low-income population in Ontario. Women account for more than half of all adults living below the poverty line. We need to provide the right tools to the women in this province who live in poverty, so that they can have every opportunity necessary to succeed.

Since the government has come into power, we have continued to recognize the importance of educating women living in poverty so that they may learn valuable lessons that will help them achieve success. Investing in our greatest asset is about investing in the people of Ontario. We must empower people to realize their full potential. We cannot forget those who need our help most. Poverty creates a lower quality of life. It often creates poor health and poor educational opportunities, poor employment prospects and a feeling of being excluded from society.

Reducing poverty and its effects on children in particular has been a key initiative of our government. Guided by a strong social conscience, we have advanced, and continue to advance, the poverty reduction agenda by implementing a range of initiatives that are designed to address both the consequences and the causes of poverty.

These initiatives will flow from a poverty reduction strategy that will include policies and measures that will have the greatest impact on those living in poverty in Ontario: initiatives such as the investment of \$135 mil-



lion to provide better dental care for low-income families, the investment of \$15 million for capital projects to support Ministry of Children and Youth Services community agencies, the \$100-million investment in social housing, and the \$10-million investment to create a brand new program to help low-income Ontarians build equity and save for an education. These demonstrate this government's commitment towards reducing poverty levels and making a real difference in the lives of Ontarians.

I'm also proud to say that our government has committed over \$350 million for a second-career strategy, which will help unemployed workers obtain the skills they need for new careers, as well as a \$75-million investment to further expand apprenticeship programs across the province.

All of us will benefit when poverty is reduced. Reducing poverty is not only about improving the health and quality of life of those who currently struggle to afford basic necessities; poverty reduction is also about ensuring a strong and prosperous future for our province.

Our poverty reduction strategy will also help those who want to become independent and self-reliant. The best solution to getting out of poverty is often a good job, and the best way to get a good job is to get a solid education. Our government will build upon actions designed to encourage students to stay in school and to help them find ways to further their education and develop skills that will enable them to find good jobs and become self-reliant.

As a past chamber president and a small business owner, I know first-hand that investing in people creates opportunities. By investing in our people, we are creating the strong workforce of today and tomorrow. We must focus on the youth of our province, on our women and other vulnerable groups. For our children, academic success begins with a healthy start to their day, which is why our government has announced that they will be doubling the funding to support the student nutrition program which provides healthy snacks and meals for more than 389,000 children across Ontario.

In my community, we are lucky to have so many community members who have been strong advocates for developing a strong poverty reduction plan. I'd like to take this opportunity to commend their hard work and dedication to this cause. In my riding of Hamilton Mountain, I'd like to commend the strong advocacy and vision of Ms. Denise Arkell of Neighbour to Neighbour and other community members from Hamilton Mountain. We are forming an advisory group to assist the needs that are specific to Hamilton Mountain.

I'd also like to commend the hard work of the Hamilton Roundtable for Poverty Reduction, which has been established by strong, resilient individuals such as Mark Chamberlain, Carolyn Milne, Craig Foye and Tom Cooper, to name just a few. These individuals have been instrumental in raising awareness to this critical issue. These are organizations that I believe can be an invaluable partner with our government, where together we can achieve success.

These individuals and their organizations have narrowed in on children as being one of the key areas that needs to be addressed when discussing poverty, and I'm fully committed to helping them achieve their goal.

1010

The message appears to be the same wherever poverty is discussed: In order to achieve results, we need to invest in our children and provide them with the tools to be successful. We have made great strides, but must all work together. We all need our partners to step up to the plate and commit to lowering our levels of poverty in this province.

Without a doubt, addressing poverty is necessary to improve our economy and to promote an inclusive society. All women and men must be able to participate fully in the social and economic benefits of Ontario. I am committed to working together with my colleagues and advocacy groups across the province to achieve our goal on such an important matter.

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier):** Further debate? The member from Thornhill.

**Mr. Peter Shurman:** This is an interesting resolution. It's kind of like a resolution that might read, "that this assembly affirm that in order for one to have a lovely Saturday afternoon picnic, one must have blue skies"—

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier):** Member from Thornhill, you are not allowed to read from electronic devices.

**Mr. Peter Shurman:** Sorry.

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier):** Thank you.

**Mr. Peter Shurman:** It's the same as a resolution that would say that to have a nice picnic you must have blue skies and white fluffy clouds on a sunny day. It's interesting that a member of the governing party would stand up in this chamber and speak about poverty and the state of the economy when the policies of this government are responsible for the very conditions she now wants to address.

The member wishes to talk about the need for investment in poverty reduction measures and the need for targets. I'm in favour of taking real and meaningful steps to reduce the scourge of poverty, and I'm in favour of establishing realistic targets for poverty reduction. However, I find this supposed concern on the government benches hollow when there is so much that could have been done to help combat poverty in last week's budget, but they chose not to do so.

Let's talk about \$390 in overtaxation owed by this government to every single man, woman and child, instead of Santa Claus-type infrastructure allocations welcomed by municipalities but representing no positive ongoing funding source. Let's talk about 194,000 manufacturing jobs lost in Ontario under this government's watch. We have an unemployment rate that is above the national average for the first time in 30 years, and we have business tax structures that are the least competitive in the entire country.



I could go on, but somehow the word “disingenuous” keeps popping into my mind. This resolution is another example of the McGuinty government talking the talk but not walking the walk. They feign concern about poverty, yet the fact is, their policies created an atmosphere in which poverty thrives.

If the McGuinty government was serious about poverty reduction, they would immediately reorganize our business tax structures and reduce tax rates to put us on a level footing with other jurisdictions in the country, and they would not be overtaxing every man, woman and child in Ontario by \$390; \$390 may not sound like much to the members of the government, but for those Ontarians living cheque to cheque, that \$390 may be the difference between having a roof over their heads or not, or perhaps it means a little extra food on the table for a family struggling to make ends meet.

There are families across this province who risk being driven into poverty by the systemic discrimination perpetuated by this government. I'm talking about the families of autistic children I heard at a round table that I convened in my own constituency this past week. Parents go broke spending money on IBI and other therapies. Parents are being forced to give up jobs to take care of autistic children, due to inadequate programming in Ontario schools. Like all parents, those of autistic children are just trying to give their kids the best possible start in life, yet the government repeatedly throws obstacles in their way and repeatedly hits them in the pocketbook. Perhaps the money spent taking these parents to court could be better used developing sound economic policies.

The population of the GTA and the greater Golden Horseshoe is due to dramatically increase over the next 25 years, and that growth is being driven by immigration. Census statistics released yesterday show an increase in the number of visible minority immigrants by 27% between 2001 and 2006. Driven by this immigration, the visible minority population of Canada now exceeds five million.

These immigrants come to Canada searching for a better life for their family. They are hard-working. They are driven. They share the same values as we do in the Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario: individual dignity, hard work, achievement and a strong safety net in case there are unexpected hard times. The changing demographics of Ontario present unique challenges in addressing poverty that must be dealt with in a timely fashion.

A few weeks ago, I met with members of the Colour of Poverty campaign. This campaign, spearheaded by various cultural organizations from across the province, is aimed at raising awareness of the racialization of poverty, and I want to share some of their statistics with you.

The number of immigrants in Toronto who are poor has grown by 125%. Many live in unsafe and inadequate housing conditions. Ethnoracial minority group members, or people of colour, make up over 13% of Canada's population; by the year 2017, it will rise to 20%. By the year

2017, more than half of Toronto's population will be people of colour.

Nearly one in five immigrants experiences a state of chronic low income, which is more than twice the rate for Canadian-born individuals. Ethnoracial minority or non-European origin families make up 37% of all families in Toronto but account for 59% of poor families. Between 1980 and 2000, while the poverty rate for the non-racialized European heritage population fell by 28%, poverty among racialized families rose by 361%; and 32% of children in racialized families and 47% of children in recent immigrant families in Ontario live in poverty.

As our population ages, we will increasingly rely upon immigration to sustain our economy and our workforce. We cannot afford to allow this sizable proportion of our population to fall behind.

This brings me to my next point. This province, and indeed this country, is the envy of the world today because of the determination and sacrifice of our seniors. However, many of our proud seniors are facing a great indignity at the hands of the McGuinty government: the loss of their homes due to increasingly unaffordable property tax rates. We have seen it far too often: seniors forced to sell the home they raised their children in because they can no longer afford to pay property tax. For many seniors in this province, there is precious little to keep them from joining the ranks of the poverty-stricken.

Municipalities are not to blame. The Municipal Act restricts the income streams available to municipalities. Cities and towns are forced to put the cost for infrastructure capital and social services on the backs of ratepayers. When cash does flow from the province for much-needed municipal projects, it is in the form of restrictive and unfair one-off programs that are often lottery based.

As I said during my inaugural speech, if we in this Legislature cannot say the policies of the government are helping people, then it means those policies need to be reworked. This resolution does nothing more than pay lip service to the reality in which too many Ontarians find themselves every day. The people of Ontario cannot put food on their tables with the hollow words of the McGuinty Liberals and the member opposite. The budget does not address this, but throws gasoline on the fire. They need real solutions, and the need becomes increasingly acute day by day.

The opposition has been warning the government that action needs to be taken to save the economy and jobs. Economists have been repeatedly stating that Ontario is on track to become a have-not province. Sadly, this government does not listen, and it is the hard-working people of Ontario who pay the price. Much like Emperor Nero during the days of the Roman Empire, Premier McGuinty is content to do nothing, and Ontario burns.

**Ms. Cheri DiNovo:** First of all, I want to say thank you to the member from Hamilton Mountain. It's not her fault that she has to stand and defend the indefensible on behalf of the McGuinty government—and it is indefensible.



This is resolution, as we all know—I think we know it's silly. This is a government that just heard from Campaign 2000 yesterday some very startling statistics and some very disturbing ones. First of all, there's not only a situation from 2005 but a situation growing out of the situation that this government found themselves in, in 2005, of increasing poverty. We now have, according to them, one in eight, sometimes one in five—depending how you read the LICO, the low-income cut-off statistics—children living in poverty in this province. This is a disaster. This is something that we should be ashamed about and moving on very quickly.

What does it mean to move on something? What it means to move on something is not to stand up and read a resolution, it's not to strike a cabinet committee; it's actually to do something. If they really were concerned about poverty in this province, what would they do? You know, nothing needs to be studied. We have lots and lots of studies to show us what needs to be done. Here's what all the anti-poverty activists are calling for. They're calling for it with one voice.

First of all, they're calling for an increase in the minimum wage to the poverty line. Is that so difficult to do? It would cost the taxpayers nothing. Raise the minimum wage to \$10.25 now, up to \$11 in 2011, and then index it to the consumer price index. That's what they need to do.

1020

What else do they need to do? They immediately need to end the clawback of the national child supplement. They have not done that. Instead, they've put in place a slightly less onerous clawback. That's all they've done. They need to do that.

They need to build housing. Again, with one voice, every anti-poverty activist has called for this government to build housing. Are they building housing? No, not one penny, not one penny in the new budget for new affordable housing units. In fact, the only money that appears is \$100 million for the repair of existing units—only a third as much, I should point out, as the city of Toronto needs for repair of existing housing units. There's not one penny for new housing units.

What else would they do? They'd certainly help out small business. I couldn't agree more. Are they? No, they're not. What we've asked for is a phase-out reform of the business education tax on small Toronto and municipal businesses that are unfairly taxed. Are they doing that? No. Well, again, crumbs. With this government, it's always pie tomorrow, never pie today; crumbs today. So what do we get? We get crumbs today and a promise that in 2014 that something will change.

We need a Buy Ontario strategy. This is this what our party has put forward. We need more jobs in this province. We need action on the job front. We don't see that. We see retraining of one in 10 workers. What are we retraining them for? Jobs in Alberta; jobs in Manitoba. That's where they're going, and that's where they will go, because this government is not doing anything right here and right at home.

We know, we know, it's incontestable: Hugh Mackenzie of the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives has said, and shown the statistics to prove it, that the poor in this province are now worse off than they were under Harris-Eves: in real dollars, worse off. That means those on ODSP, OW, minimum wage—the poor. Again, what does this government do? Nothing. They spin. They have a call-in number; they have a website; they have a photo op. But do they act? Absolutely not.

Inaction is egregious ethically as to make the matter worse. So now they are in this indefensible—and again, apologies to the poor member for Hamilton Mountain, who had to stand up and defend the indefensible—position of making the poor poorer in the province of Ontario.

**Mr. Khalil Ramal:** I want to stand up in my place and take the opportunity to congratulate the member for Hamilton Mountain for bringing such an important resolution to this House. To the members opposite and to the people of Ontario, what we did during our last mandate, and what we're planning to do in the future in this mandate—as she outlined, the vision of this government is to reduce the poverty level in the province of Ontario. As you know, it doesn't take a great thinker to think we have a problem in the province of Ontario. We have a poverty issue in Ontario. There's no doubt about it. We're not going to say, "No, we don't," and just live in a fantasy dream. No. It's a reality, yes, that we do have a problem.

That's why we addressed this issue during our last mandate. Almost the majority of the last budget, in 2007, was catered toward social issues and poverty issues, to address the working poor, to invest more money in this element of our society. Also, due to this strategy, in this mandate our Premier appointed the Honourable Deb Matthews to lead a cabinet committee to do studies and take initiatives in order to reduce poverty in Ontario, and she is doing so.

The member for Hamilton Mountain is a great activist in this group. She's also a member of the women's caucus, who meet on a regular basis to address this issue. As you know, the women in this province play a pivotal role in eliminating poverty in this beautiful province.

Since we got elected in 2003, we put a lot of steps forward in order to increase the minimum wage, to support the working poor in this province. The member from the Conservative Party was speaking. Do you know what they did? They put a freeze on it. They didn't do anything. And guess what? Since we got elected in 2003, we've increased Ontario Works and ODSP levels by almost 9%. Guess what the Conservatives did? They reduced it by 25%. This government cares about poor people. As you know, the poor come from different elements; some are as a result of mental illness, some are as a result of being newcomers to this province who don't know how to integrate, and some are seniors among us. That's why this government pays attention to all of those elements. For example, we increased Ontario Works, as I mentioned, by 9%. In this budget, there is \$250 for every



senior who makes less than \$50,000, and a couple who make less than \$60,000 are eligible to earn a certain amount of money and some kind of tax rebate if they want to remain in their homes. As a member of this government, I'm proud of our initiatives.

Due to the constraint and the economical change in North America, due to the economical shift in this province, we had to restrain our budget; we couldn't do more than we are supposed to do if we had a \$200-billion budget. But considering what we have, considering all the elements we are facing in the province of Ontario, we invested a great deal in our social issues like our dental program in order to support the poor among us. We invested more money in social housing: almost \$100 million to fix a lot of social housing in the province.

The NDP member was saying that we didn't invest any money in supporting housing, but I want to tell her to go back to her record and our government's record and see how many millions of dollars we invested in many different communities across the province to support housing, to house the poor people among us. We believe strongly on this side of the House that our responsibility as a government is to support the most vulnerable people among us. It is our responsibility to support them, because we believe strongly that we cannot do it alone. All of us have to work together in order to create a productive society.

We have a lot of people among us below the poverty line, not because they want to be poor, but because of certain circumstances they couldn't make it. It's our responsibility as a government and as a society to give them the support, the lift and the ability to walk with us in order to utilize the ability to support themselves, support their families and also contribute to this beautiful economy and society. Only in this fashion and in this way can all of us prosper in Ontario.

The member for Hamilton Mountain brought to this House an important issue that all of us are concerned about. Every one of us deals with it from a different point of view. The member opposite from the Conservatives—they didn't care about poverty issues when they were in power; they slashed Ontario Works, ODSP, and they never built affordable homes or supported any social housing.

**Mr. Michael Prue:** You never built any either.

**Mr. Khalil Ramal:** We did a lot to support housing. Our record shows clearly how many millions we spent investing in social housing to support the people who have no ability to rent, because we think it's our obligation to give them the support and a lift.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for allowing me to speak. I want to congratulate the member from Hamilton Mountain for bringing this important issue to us.

**Ms. Sylvia Jones:** I'm pleased to speak today on this important resolution. I can't believe there's anyone in this House who would disagree with the statement that your government should have an effective plan for a strong economy and your government should invest in poverty reduction. I also believe, however, that the un-

fortunate part of today's debate is that in the second term of the Liberal government, we're still talking about the importance of having an effective plan instead of discussing the plan. Where's the vision? Where's the plan? The McGuinty Liberals are in their fifth year and we still hear about the need for further study, further review.

I believe that Ontarians are looking for leadership in how the McGuinty Liberals are going to deal with poverty while our economy is slowing, because we all know that poverty will not be reduced if Ontario's economy is facing a downturn. Some economists are using the word "recession." After four years of high revenue, where does that leave us for the next four years?

As the community and social services critic for the Progressive Conservative caucus, I have been watching and reading with more than a passing interest as the social assistance rolls are increasing across Ontario. In Essex county, social assistance caseloads increased 9% in 2007 and are expected to increase by another 6% in 2008. Now, when I see caseloads increase like that, my first thought is, where are the jobs?

1030

In Windsor, I think we know where the jobs are. Windsor's economy is shrinking because Ontario's manufacturing sector is shrinking because of this government's lack of vision. And now, we have the tragic outcome of Mayor Eddie Francis holding open houses to find ways to assist Windsor residents who are commuting to western Canada. Imagine; I've heard of this long-distance commute before, but never for Ontario. Bless Windsor for their ingenuity, and I wish the workers well, but this is not a long-term plan to keep Ontario strong.

When you start losing large portions of your population as they leave our province for jobs elsewhere, you start losing tax assessment dollars. And don't forget your social services costs continue to rise, because not everyone has the resources or training to find a job elsewhere, and you have fewer and fewer people paying to look after our most vulnerable. The model is not sustainable.

I'd like to highlight some of the points made in a recent paper from the Institute for Competitiveness and Prosperity. For those of you unfamiliar with the work of the institute, they are an independent, not-for-profit organization established in 2001 to serve as a research arm for the Ontario Task Force on Competitiveness, Productivity and Economic Progress. Their goal is to continue to increase our standard of living in Ontario. The institute and the task force are supported through the Ministry of Economic Development and Trade, so I'm sure the members on the Liberal benches can receive a copy to peruse. I would recommend it. Some excellent thought has been put into this paper.

The institute states, "Canada has one of the most prosperous and competitive economies in the world," but—there's always a "but"—"we are not living up to our full economic potential that would increase well being for ourselves and future generations." The institute confirms that Canada's economy is one of the most successful, but



against the United States, who happen to be our largest trading partner, we continue to fall further behind.

So how do we shrink that gap? The institute has proposed a number of initiatives, but for the purposes of our discussion here today, I will focus on one of their priorities: Build a smarter tax system to raise motivation for business to invest. "Currently, Canada has among the highest tax rates on business investment in the world. The federal government is taking dramatic action to give Canada an environment more conducive to business investment," and Ontario needs to follow Ottawa's lead. That is a direct quote out of the institute's paper.

Finally, the institute has highlighted four areas they would like to see the Ontario government focus on:

(1) Attitudes: Accept the challenge; overcome complacency.

(2) Investment: Focus on people and technology.

(3) Motivations: Pursue smarter taxation; remove capital tax immediately; reduce corporate income tax rates.

(4) Structures: Place a premium on creativity and innovation.

Sounds good, and where have we been hearing this before? From no less than the members of the Progressive Conservative party, of course. My colleague from Niagara West—Glanbrook has spoken often of the need to have a strong economy so that we can ensure our government has the resources needed to protect our most vulnerable citizens.

All of which brings us back to the member from Hamilton Mountain's resolution: that government should have "an effective plan for a strong economy," and our government should invest in "poverty reduction." One of the best ways to have a strong economy and have the ability to invest in poverty reduction, instead of just talking about it, is to remove the barriers so that everyone who can work has a job to go to. Then, collect a reasonable amount of tax to ensure that you can look after vulnerable citizens who cannot work.

I would hope that we stop talking about the need for a plan, and have this government bring forward their vision so that we can debate something concrete.

**M<sup>me</sup> France Gélinas:** I also would like to thank the member from Hamilton Mountain for trying her best this morning with this resolution. But as my colleague has mentioned, it is hard to spin when you have nothing to work from.

When the McGuinty government got elected, they were an activist government. They were going to put poverty at the top of their agenda. In 2003, Dalton McGuinty's Liberals promised to end the clawback on the national child benefit supplement. We all know that that promise was broken, but that didn't stop them from making it again in the 2007 election. We are now in April 2008, and the clawback is still happening.

Just as shameful: Families and individuals receiving social assistance, either through the Ontario disability support program, better known as ODSP, or Ontario Works, OW, are actually receiving less in provincial ben-

efits when inflation is taken into account than when the government of Dalton McGuinty took power in 2003. It has gone down, not up. Ontario's poorest citizens fell behind during the Mike Harris years, but when the McGuinty government was elected they continued to fall behind. Nothing changed for them.

En 2000, les libéraux de Dalton McGuinty avaient promis de cesser de reprendre la prime nationale pour enfants du gouvernement fédéral. Ils ont eu quatre ans. Tout le monde sait qu'ils n'ont pas gardé cette promesse. Ils ont refait cette promesse-là en 2007, mais nous sommes maintenant en avril 2008 et la pratique continue. Le gouvernement fédéral donne 100 \$ par mois aux familles qui ont des enfants pour les aider, mais pour les familles les plus pauvres, celles qui en ont le plus besoin, le gouvernement provincial reprend ces dollars.

Pour ceux qui vivent soit avec une incapacité, une invalidité ou un handicap, qui ne peuvent pas survenir à leurs besoins et qui ont besoin du programme d'appui aux personnes invalides ou du programme Ontario au travail, ces gens sont forcés de vivre sous le seuil de la pauvreté. Ils ont eu de petites augmentations pendant que le gouvernement libéral était au pouvoir, mais si on tient compte de l'index des coûts de la vie, ils reçoivent moins en ce moment qu'ils recevaient en 2003 lorsque le gouvernement a été élu.

Pendant les huit ans que le gouvernement de Mike Harris a été au pouvoir, les pauvres en ont arraché dur—cela a été huit ans sans aucune augmentation. Avec le gouvernement McGuinty, ils avaient un peu d'espoir, mais on se rend compte, cinq ans plus tard—ça fait cinq ans que les libéraux sont au pouvoir, et les gens qui reçoivent Ontario au travail et les gens qui reçoivent des primes d'invalidité sont plus pauvres maintenant qu'ils n'étaient en 2003.

Meanwhile, Ontario's working poor are also falling further and further behind. In Dalton McGuinty's Ontario, 1.2 million working men and women earn less than \$10 an hour. Those 1.2 million Ontarians are predominantly women, young people and new Canadians. In fact, people working 40 hours a week at \$8.75 an hour are still \$4,000 below the poverty line. The NDP believes that aggressive measures should have been taken in the provincial budget to bring the level of poverty down, but it didn't happen.

Pour 1,2 million de travailleurs, ce sont les Ontariens et les Ontariennes qui gagnent moins de 10 \$ de l'heure, et on ne se fait pas d'illusion : de ces 1,2 million de personnes-là, la plupart d'entre elles sont des femmes, des personnes jeunes et des nouveaux arrivants. Pour ceux qui travaillent 40 heures par semaine—on parle d'un job à temps plein à 8,75 \$ de l'heure ; c'est le salaire minimum en ce moment—ces gens-là sont encore 4 000 \$ sous le seuil de la pauvreté. Ça veut dire que tu ne peux pas payer ton loyer, l'épicerie, un petit peu de linge et le transport pour te rendre au travail. Il n'y en a pas suffisamment.

The province announced that they were doubling the meals for children at school and community centres



through the student nutrition program. That sounded like good news to me. I was excited about that. Unfortunately, the program is so meagre that even when you double it, all it means is an extra \$50 a year for each of the 400,000 students who need that program and are expected to benefit. If you do the math, that means a whole dollar a week. It used to be 50 cents. They've added another 50 cents. It's now a dollar.

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Le programme de nutrition va doubler. Au début, ça semble comme une bonne nouvelle : on va doubler le budget. On va y investir des millions de dollars de plus. Donc, au début j'étais assez contente. J'ai dit, « Bon, bien. Voilà finalement quelque chose de bien. » Mais quand on commence à faire un petit peu de maths en arrière de ça, tu te rends compte que ça veut dire 50 \$ par enfant, parce qu'il y a environ 400 000 enfants qui vivent dans la pauvreté en Ontario. Ça veut dire un dollar de plus—un dollar par semaine. Ils recevaient 50 sous; ils reçoivent 50 sous de plus—un dollar par semaine.

Est-ce qu'il n'y a pas un libéral qui est allé faire l'épicerie depuis 20 ans ? Un dollar par semaine ne t'achète pas beaucoup de nourriture. Ces enfants-là vont continuer d'avoir faim, vont continuer d'avoir de la misère à bien performer à l'école.

The NDP moved a number of motions outlining an ambitious anti-poverty program. We talked about the elimination of the national child benefit clawback and immediately implementing the full Ontario child benefit, which would provide equal benefit to all low-income families, regardless of resources. We talked about publicly funded child care. We talked about Ontario Smiles, which would provide dental care to the poorest. We talked about increasing minimum wage to \$10.25 an hour, and to \$11.25 by 2011. We talked about increasing ODSP and annexing it to the cost of living. But none of this happened. Le gouvernement n'a pas écouté les recommandations des néo-démocrates.

On voulait arrêter d'enlever la prime nationale aux enfants les plus pauvres. Ils ne nous ont pas écoutés.

On voulait que le supplément de l'Ontario soit appliqué à son plein potentiel tout de suite. Mais non ; on devra attendre un autre quatre ans.

On voulait également un système de garderies publiques qui permet à toutes les familles qui ont besoin d'un système de garderies d'y avoir accès à un prix modique, un peu sous le régime qui est au Québec en ce moment à 7 \$ par jour.

On avait un plan ambitieux pour s'assurer que nos dents étaient inclus dans le système le santé. C'est à dire que s'il y a une personne qui ne peut pas aller chez le dentiste, on aurait un programme pour l'aider.

On voudrait également augmenter le salaire minimum à 10,25 \$ maintenant, l'indexer au coût de la vie, et le monter à 11,25 \$ par 2011. Rien de ça n'a été retenu.

When the McGuinty government promised poverty was going to be at the top of the agenda, we thought we would see leadership. What we saw was a big letdown of the poorest in Ontario.

Quand les libéraux de McGuinty nous ont dit qu'ils seraient sérieux face à la pauvreté et qu'elle serait au-dessus de l'ordre du jour, ça nous a donné bon espoir. Mais ce qu'on a vu, ce n'est pas du leadership pour les personnes les plus pauvres. Cela a été un abandon total. Ceci n'est pas acceptable.

**Mrs. Laura Albanese:** I am very pleased to rise today and speak in support of this resolution put forth by my colleague from Hamilton Mountain.

My own riding of York South–Weston has some things in common with Hamilton Mountain. Both of these ridings have historically been places of arrival for many newcomers to our province. These hard-working people contributed to Ontario's growth over the decades, often by working in the manufacturing sector. Today, due to the changing dynamics of global markets and the emergence of new technology, my riding of York South–Weston has been affected by the migration of manufacturing jobs to the greater Toronto area and even beyond. For example, the Kodak plant, which opened in 1913, actually closed in 2005.

The residents of Hamilton Mountain and York South–Weston want to provide for themselves and their families. They have a strong work ethic and are ready to roll up their sleeves. But many are in need of help. Many residents continue to lag behind the economic growth and prosperity that are enjoyed by so many other Ontario communities. We know that the small business sector in particular is in need of revitalization. Many in our workforce must have innovative retraining opportunities if they are to continue to be productive and self-sustaining citizens in the future.

One of the key pillars of our government's budget approved just yesterday is retraining. We intend to give people who are eager to work the tools necessary to acquire the skills so that they may contribute by participating in the growing field of today's economy.

An effective plan for a strong economy must include investing in poverty reduction. That is why we are moving in the right direction by working on a comprehensive poverty reduction strategy. We need a long-term vision. The area of Weston–Mount Dennis in the riding of York South–Weston is one of the 13 priority neighbourhoods identified by the city of Toronto and the United Way. This is one of the areas which can greatly benefit and be positively affected by a poverty reduction strategy. My riding is also home to many single-parent families who would benefit from such a strategy.

Our government is making a commitment to improving the quality of life of Ontarians. I would like to mention just some of the initiatives that we are taking. We are providing benefits for low-income earners. We are doubling the funding for nutrition programs in the schools so that our children may learn more effectively, and when I visited some of the schools in my riding, the news was most welcome. We are investing in English as a second language, benefiting newcomers. We are building on the Ontario child benefit, providing almost 1.3 million children and their families much-needed support. We're in-



vesting in affordable supportive housing and repairs to affordable housing, and increasing the minimum wage and social assistance rates. And there is more to do.

Our government strives to have a balanced approach. History teaches us that an inclusive and compassionate society—a society that reaches out and helps people when they are most in need—is a society that works and can grow. Leading thinkers like Richard Florida remind us that the most important aspect in the new economy is the creative capital inherent in each person. Our government's goal is to help each person realize their potential, give families a chance to get ahead and give people who need it access to programs so that they may overcome temporary economic challenges and not get caught up in the vicious poverty cycle.

The residents in ridings such as Hamilton Mountain and York South–Weston are particularly vulnerable in these changing economic times. Therefore, I support the resolution put forth by the member from Hamilton Mountain. This is an important issue. I think it's important that everyone has a chance at success, regardless of temporary shifting economic paradigms.

**Mr. Michael Prue:** I only have a minute and a half, so I would like to quote one of my favourite authors on Liberals and what they try to spin. It's 75 years old. It's a guy by the name of Goerwell, and he writes as follows: "Anyone who relishes empty phrases, who believes in catchwords, ornamental preambles and in the supreme power of humbuggery, will always find persons available to give an hour's bombastic talk on any subject between the remotest star and the centre of the earth." I think what we have here today is a very good example of what Goerwell said in 1931.

I grew up in a place called Regent Park, and people know what that place is like today, as it was when I was a boy. There was poverty everywhere and people talked about doing something about it. In fact, it was talk and talk and more talk, and in the end very little was done.

I read this today, the well-meaning phrase, I'm sure, from the member from Hamilton Mountain: to invest in poverty reduction. With the greatest of respect, the government had an option to do that in the budget and failed. They gave 2% for those poor people on ODSP, and then when the questions were asked, it's only in the last quarter of the year. They have to wait nine months to even see the 2%. They said they were giving some money to people on ODSP, but in fact there is absolutely nothing at this point.

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**Ms. Leeanna Pendergast:** I rise today to support the resolution brought forward by my colleague the member from Hamilton Mountain, to support the McGuinty government's commitment to poverty reduction and to reiterate that an effective plan for a strong economy must include setting targets for and investing in poverty reduction.

The McGuinty government is committed to improving the quality of life of all Ontarians. This includes families and vulnerable citizens. This government is taking action

under the government's poverty reduction strategy: dental care for low-income families; a student nutrition program—when I'm talking to my communities in Kitchener–Conestoga, \$32 million is not meagre; a 2% increase to benefits under Ontario Works and the Ontario disability support program, increasing the comfort allowance for residents of long-term-care homes in 2008-09; a new property tax grant over five years for low- and moderate-income seniors, homeowners.

The McGuinty government is committed to its people. Ontario's advantage is its people. We've made a commitment to children and youth to give them the best possible elementary, secondary and post-secondary education. We are giving workers of all ages ongoing opportunities to upgrade their skills and pursue lifelong learning. We're giving workers facing change the support and long-term retraining they need, not just to find new jobs but to find better jobs. We're giving newcomers to Ontario the information, access, training and language skills they need to reach their full potential. We're giving the unemployed and underemployed the literacy skills, the academic upgrading, the training and the support they need to enter the workforce.

The McGuinty government is committed to new measures to tackle poverty and to build opportunity. Ontario's plan for a strong economy includes supporting low-income families so that everyone can have the opportunity to succeed in the 21st century. Premier McGuinty outlined this when he stated, "Ontario is only at its best when all of us are working, building and dreaming together. Supporting each other is not only the right thing to do, it is also the smart thing to do and part of our plan for a stronger economy."

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier):** Ms. Aggelonitis, you have up to two minutes to respond.

**Ms. Sophia Aggelonitis:** I'd like to thank the members from Thornhill, Parkdale–High Park, London–Fanshawe, Dufferin–Caledon, Nickel Belt, York South–Weston, Beaches–East York and Kitchener–Conestoga for their very insightful comments this morning.

Poverty is in all of our communities, and I firmly believe that we need to continue working together to achieve our goals. I am committed to helping the cause of poverty reduction across this province, and I look forward to working with all of my colleagues in the House and the community members to achieve further success. This is an important issue for all of us. It is something we have made great strides in, but there is more to do, and we will do more.

## WATER QUALITY QUALITÉ DE L'EAU

**Mrs. Carol Mitchell:** I move that, in the opinion of this House, the Green Ribbon beach program, an important environmental initiative proposed by the Lake Huron Centre for Coastal Conservation, be supported.



**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier):** Pursuant to standing order 96, Mrs. Mitchell, you have up to 10 minutes.

**Mrs. Carol Mitchell:** I rise this morning to speak on a matter of significant importance, not just to my constituents in Huron-Bruce, but to all of those in the province who are concerned about water quality and the condition of our Ontario beaches.

Members of this Legislature are very concerned about the state of the province's drinking water and the role that the Great Lakes play in that equation.

As you know, the entire western coast of my riding runs along Lake Huron, from Grand Bend to Southampton, making the issue of beach standards an important matter for my constituents. The quality and safety of the beaches in my riding also goes a long way toward supporting the local tourism industry in many of the coastal communities, and it certainly has a direct impact on our local economy.

The green ribbon beach program is proposed as a framework to recognize excellence in environmental stewardship for beaches located in rural communities. This program has been based on the very successful but more urban-focused Blue Flag program. The Blue Flag program is an internationally recognized beach water quality program that is sponsored and administered by Environmental Defence here in Canada.

Before speaking to the green ribbon program, I just want to discuss some of the key considerations of the Blue Flag program and several of the requirements that have made it successful in many of the urban regions of this province. This will also help to illustrate how the green ribbon program would be successful in a similar manner but with a differentiation in the requirements that will make for a stronger focus on the province's rural beaches.

As I stated before, the eligibility requirements for the Blue Flag program have a decidedly more urban focus when it comes to beach protection. To offer credence to the green ribbon program, I just want to use a few examples.

With the Blue Flag program, there's a necessity for lifeguards. When we think about the rural areas, being able to provide the life-saving equipment and the lifeguards at a given beach area becomes very problematic. The presence of lifeguards at a Blue Flag beach is recommended in order to increase the beach's safety level, especially in beaches with a higher number of beachgoers. For rural areas, this specification simply would not be possible.

The beachfront along Lake Huron in my riding extends far past the urban boundaries of the towns, and the cost in both dollars and human resources to have lifeguards and safety equipment at all beach locations is simply not achievable.

Another of the requirements for the Blue Flag certification is that the beach in question must be constantly patrolled by authorized and adequate security personnel. While this is a very necessary element for safety at urban

beaches, as my previous point indicated, it's untenable in smaller rural communities, from both a fiscal and human resource perspective.

Another condition of the Blue Flag program is the requirement that a supply of potable drinking water must be available at the beach at all times. It's specified that this source of water can be by way of fountain, pipe or faucet, but that it must be protected from contamination by animals. While this, again, is a very noble and often necessary requirement for a public beach in a populated area, I would again argue that it would become a near impossibility for those requirements to be followed on many of the vast beachfronts along Lake Huron.

Despite my previous statements—I want to be very, very clear on this—I am by no means not lending very, very strong support to the Blue Flag program. I feel that it is a very worthwhile program and one that adds a great deal of value to the communities across the province that have achieved certification.

For just one moment, I want to talk about who has achieved certification within my riding. The municipality of Kincardine has received accreditation as a Blue Flag beach. Another beach in the town of Goderich is currently a candidate for certification.

However, as I alluded to earlier, the Blue Flag designation is simply not attainable for many of the smaller rural areas that have beaches along Lake Huron. That is why the green ribbon award is of great benefit to the small communities where environmental sustainability of their beaches is certainly needed.

This brings me back to the green ribbon program. This award, which proposes to recognize those beaches which are prized for their high quality, where care is taken to preserve their natural, unspoiled environment, offers many similar benefits to the Blue Flag designation, but its centre focuses on helping small rural beaches reach the certification. The green ribbon program proposes a central, integral role in the protection of beaches for those people who live near the beach. The program is unique and it emphasizes local stewardship by volunteers.

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Eligibility for the green ribbon program award involves five key requirements. The first requirement is that the eligible beach must be managed carefully and in consultation with the local conservation organizations as part of a stewardship plan that respects the environmentally sensitive nature of the beach.

Secondly, the program distinguishes eligible beaches as those areas that have received active community contribution in implementing numerous beach stewardship practices.

A third requirement the green ribbon program indicates is that eligible beaches must be relatively free from structures and erosion protection that serve to harden the coast and restrict natural process.

The final two requirements for attaining the green ribbon program award for an area beach are that the designated beach areas must promote public accessibility



and that the participating beach organization must actively engage local residents in coastal environmental education on ways to help maintain and sustain the beach-front.

The green ribbon beach program award has also set out 15 desired objectives that this program can achieve, if implemented. Due to constraints on time today, I cannot go into specific details, but I would encourage you to go to the website for the Lake Huron Centre for Coastal Conservation.

I'd like to recognize the Lake Huron Centre for Coastal Conservation, which is the organization that has taken the time and the effort to propose the green ribbon beach program award. The Lake Huron Centre for Coastal Conservation, which is celebrating its 20th anniversary this year, has set forward the goals of protecting and restoring the coastal environment of Lake Huron and further promoting a healthy ecosystem along the coast. The coastal centre, which is a registered, not-for-profit charitable organization, has benefited from the work of thousands of community volunteers dedicated to the conservation of Lake Huron's natural shoreline environment. It functions as the local coastal management resource team for lakeshore communities, partnering conservation authorities, government agencies and the public.

The centre has also been the sponsor for an annual public seminar in the community, including last year's *It All Ends Up in the Lake* conference, which was also very well attended. This year, the centre will host a conference entitled *Is the Coast Clear?* on May 23. This will commemorate the 10th anniversary of this conference within Huron-Bruce.

**Mr. Jeff Leal:** You should attend that one.

**Mrs. Carol Mitchell:** I will be there, as I have been at all the other conferences. It is certainly a very worthwhile day.

I believe that programs such as the proposed green ribbon award are setting their objectives towards helping to maintain and protect our Great Lakes. This is one of the central reasons why I'm here today supporting this very important program, and I'm asking for your support as well.

The protection of our Great Lakes through such programs is yet another way in which we—all of us today, as legislative members—can help this very worthy cause: to recognize the thousands of volunteers that have dedicated good portions of their lives, their children's lives and their grandchildren's lives to ensure that we have a water system that will meet the needs of all Ontarians into the future. It's something that is a constant work-in-progress.

Whatever we can do to raise the awareness of what we can do as individuals, what we can do as groups and what we can do as legislative members—let's all support it today.

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier):** Further debate?

**Mr. Randy Hillier:** Good morning. I have to say that when I was seeking election and looking forward to coming to Queen's Park, I thought we would be debating the great subjects and topics of interest and concern for Ontario: the high unemployment, the half a million people without family doctors, the need for mental health assistance and care and so many important subjects. I'm beginning to believe that the more ridiculous the subject, the more importance we place on it down here.

I was reading through this green ribbon program the other night and it sounds very good. We're here for debate right at the moment, but of course, in order to have debate there must be a subject of substance, not just fluff. This sounds good, it sounds fluffy, it sounds like motherhood and apple pie, but really, it's somewhat disturbing.

First off, when you look up in the dictionary the words "coastal" or "coast," you'll see that it is a saltwater shoreline. I've been living in Ontario all my life. I have never found a saltwater body here in Ontario. Maybe there is—

**Mr. Michael Prue:** Hudson Bay.

**Mr. Randy Hillier:** Oh, you're right. I don't think the honourable member was thinking of the beaches of Hudson Bay when this was done, though.

Anyway, we have to really look at this. Cleaning up a beach, cleaning up your property—public property, private property—is a good and honourable thing to do. I know in my own neighbourhood—I live on a road that's called the dump road in Lanark county. From time to time, litter and debris get thrown on the road; it falls out of trucks, whatever. We don't have a committee and we don't get a green ribbon, but everybody in the community goes out and picks up the garbage as it falls off the trucks. That really is what people in rural Ontario and in all of Ontario are all about. People don't need to be legislated or get a little green ribbon on their forehead for picking up some garbage.

I think the important things here that we have to talk about in this House are getting lost in the fluff. Here is a binder, and on every page in it is a young man or woman from Ontario who has been denied an apprenticeship job because of the government's restrictive policies on apprenticeship ratios.

I have another note here. In my area alone, 235 people with intellectual disabilities cannot find a home; 273 people are on wait-lists for program services such as respite care, therapy, clinical assessment, and the list goes on and on. And what does this government come up with? Fluff. Where is the substantive debate? Where is the honest and forthright discussion about the real concerns and subjects of interest and importance to the people of rural Ontario?

Let me read something out of this green ribbon program. "Litter removing is accomplished without mechanical equipment, thereby leaving all naturally occurring debris, such as driftwood and other strandline debris, to interact with the natural beach process, unless it becomes contaminated with a substance that is hazardous to public health."



That's a long-winded way to say pick up the Tim Hortons cup if you see it on the beach. Really, do we need to direct people to do that? Do we need to give them a little green star or ribbon on their forehead if they did pick it up? I know the people in my community, and I think the people in the honourable member's community as well, are thoughtful, respectful people who don't need Big Brother giving them a little push and a little pat on the back to pick up some flotsam or jetsam that has landed on our coastal environment.

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I could go on and on, but the people of Huron-Bruce, just like the people of Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington, expect a higher calibre of debate and discussion. They expect the people in this House to stand up and represent them, to fix the economy where it has been broken, to get family doctors where there are none available. They expect more from us than just fluff.

We need to deliver more to the people of rural Ontario. We need to deliver more to all people in Ontario. Let us raise our awareness, let us raise the calibre of our discussion, and let us do what is right for everybody in Ontario and fix the real problems.

**Mr. Michael Prue:** It's a pleasure to be here today to speak to this issue. How can one say one cannot support any environmental initiative, no matter how small, that is going to help our communities, help have better beaches, help people to swim and have safer surroundings?

The green ribbon initiative, as the mover has stated, is part and parcel of the larger Blue Flag initiative. If I can speak about how effective that has been, to add some credibility to her motion, the Blue Flag initiative, which has been adopted in and around the city of Toronto, has proved to be an amazing vehicle to bring people into our city and to have Torontonians recognize the clarity of the water, the safety of the beaches and that it is a good and safe place to take one's family on a hot summer day. In fact, most of the beaches that have been recognized and have blue flags flying above them are in my riding of Beaches-East York. The safest beach of all, I understand, is Clarke Beach which is in the adjacent riding of Toronto-Danforth, but Woodbine Beaches is a very close second.

We go each year at the start of the Blue Flag season to raise the blue flag to ensure that the beach is in pristine condition, that the workers have been out there picking up the bottles, cans and winter detritus that are strewn around. It looks very nice, and when you go into the water, although it is a little chilly when we go in there toward the end of June, it is clear and safe. At the beach, we'll have something I think the green ribbon does not, and that is excellent washroom facilities, facilities for people to have barbecues and family picnics—picnic tables, drinking water and all those other things.

I support the initiative, but I have to question whether or not the initiative is going to deliver what people actually want and need. I agree that rural municipalities do not have the wherewithal or the monies or the staff to ensure that a green ribbon beach will meet the same

conditions of a Blue Flag beach in a large municipality like my own. What I would like to see, which is not contained within the body of the motion and perhaps cannot be contained because it involves money—and I understand the constraints that all members have in private members' business—if this member is successful in having her bill passed today, is that the McGuinty government properly fund beach safety, that the McGuinty government properly fund the protection and restoration of Ontario lakes, particularly the Great Lakes, and that the McGuinty government in a budget at some point properly fund the municipalities, particularly the small ones along Lake Huron where this initiative is going to take place, so that they can actually do more than just declare it a green beach. Perhaps they can do as much as meet the requirements of a Blue Flag beach; they can put in picnic tables and washroom facilities, they can put in clean potable drinking water in all of the areas, so that they can meet the international standard.

To state that simply, you want to have an environmentally sound beach is a good thing, but to do something to ensure that the entire world knows about it is certainly something else. If this member is serious, then I would suggest not only is it the passage of this motion, but it is forcing the government to do the right thing and to fund those small municipalities so that they too can meet international standards.

I have occasion from time to time to spend some of my holidays along Lake Huron. My wife in particular thinks that the town of Goderich and the town of Bayfield are two of her favourite places not only in this province, but in the world. She would recognize that on the beaches of those communities, as well as those in Southampton, Grand Bend, Kincardine and all the other beaches and towns up and down that wonderful coast, they have a similar opportunity to what we enjoy in Toronto.

So I encourage the member not only for having put this forward, but I also encourage her to go the extra mile and convince her government that funds should be spent on this worthwhile endeavour, and not just to be content with having a green ribbon beach. As good as that may sound, it's not going to bring people and tourists into that area, because they're not going to understand the importance of green ribbons, whereas internationally, they certainly will understand when they see a blue flag flying above each of these cities and towns and their respective municipal beaches.

I would be remiss, though, if I did not talk about something else in my community, which is the effect that the wonderful Blue Flag beaches have in bringing people in our communities down to the waterfront in the summer months, in bringing people from around the world to discover how beautiful Ontario and Toronto are in this respect—and then to have again an assault on our neighbourhoods in close proximity to those beaches. I'm speaking about the assault that is taking place just west of Beaches-East York and the riding of Toronto-Danforth, but certainly within eyesight of the border, of big-box



retail moving along Eastern Avenue and all of the lands south of Eastern Avenue which were supposed to, in Toronto's dream, be used for parks and recreation and beachfront. Instead, what we are seeing is developers moving in, in a great way, with the support not of the city of Toronto, but with the support of some provincial agencies, to turn what was supposed to be parkland and beachfront into big-box retail.

I don't have to tell you what that's going to be like, because I have been to many small towns where I have seen the downtowns completely gutted. I remember in particular going to Brantford and seeing not a single store open in that once-vibrant community, and everybody is out by the Wal-Mart. I have to tell you, we don't want that experience around our Blue Flag beaches. We don't want the experience of having Queen Street, which is probably the finest shopping street in all of Canada in terms of small stores and individual, friendly service, turned into a ghost town, that has been visited upon so many small towns in Ontario, where big retailers have built on the outskirts of the town and literally siphoned and sucked the life right out of the communities. We do not want the deleterious effect in our community of neighbourhoods being destroyed, of traffic increasing, of parking and pollution, the loss of potential parkland.

We have already seen a great opportunity lost when this government chose to steamroll ahead with the Portlands Energy project, a place that was supposed to have been parkland, a place that was right on the waterfront, and a place which has now been lost for generations. We are asking this government not to lend your support and your credibility to those who would build big-box retail. The city of Toronto is not supporting it, but the developers have said that they intend, with their army of accountants, their army of planners and their army of lawyers, to descend upon the Ontario Municipal Board where they intend to get what they want. We are asking, if this government is serious about Green Ribbon beaches, is serious about blue flags and the environment, is serious about neighbourhoods, to do one more thing other than pass this motion, and that is to put a stop to the abomination that is about to be descended upon my community.

1120

I think that's all I have to say on this particular issue. I wish the member well. I hope that the green ribbon program will make even better those communities along Lake Huron, but I ask that the members of her government really take a close and serious look at what doing nothing in terms of environmental initiatives in my community and doing far too little in her own is wreaking upon the people of this wonderful province.

**Mr. Khalil Ramal:** I want to stand up and support my colleague the member from Huron-Bruce and her resolution, the green ribbon initiative. It's a very good initiative, especially because the member comes from the area. It's also important to me as a member from London, where we're trying to create a water project called HELP. This project is going to feed London and the surrounding

area. It's going to provide for almost 6,500 square kilometres in the whole region. I think it's important for us to have Lake Huron protected and safe and clean.

Before 2003, the environment was all about Walkerton; after 2003, there are many different initiatives. You have the greenbelt, which is the best-protected area in the whole world, and initiatives including the Clean Water Act—which is, I believe, the most important bill in the whole history of the province of Ontario—to protect wells and water in our province.

I remember when the member from Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington was in Cornwall. He stood up in his old capacity with his group to protest that bill. He doesn't want the government to pass that bill, because he believed strongly back then that it's not our responsibility as a government to interfere in any issue concerning the people of Ontario. Despite his position and his party's position, we passed that bill to protect our environment, to protect our water sources, and to make sure the people of this province drink safe water.

That's why this resolution is important to us as a government, to us as a society, and to me as the member from London-Fanshawe. We are going to benefit a great deal from this project, because we want to make sure that the sources of water we're going to drink from in the future will be clean and also safe.

I want to congratulate the member from Huron-Bruce, who always brings forward great initiatives, and also for being a great advocate for her constituents and the whole area. She brings a different perspective because she served as a municipal councillor for a long time, and she knows first-hand the important issues for her community, especially when it comes to protecting lakes and water shores. Many people come from across the province of Ontario and sometimes the United States to visit and enjoy the beaches in her riding. I think she has a vested interest in creating initiatives to protect those shores and beaches, because it is important. She wants tourist activity in her area. She wants people to come from across Ontario, the United States, wherever, to enjoy clean beaches. She also wants to recognize the people who protect those waterfronts and make sure they are clean and safe for all the people who want to visit.

Mr. Speaker, thank you very much for allowing me to speak. I want to end by congratulating the member for Huron-Bruce, and also to say that I'm going to support this resolution.

**Ms. Laurie Scott:** I'm pleased to join the discussion this morning on private members' business and the resolution brought forward by the member from Huron-Bruce: that, in the opinion of this House, the green ribbon beach program, an important environmental initiative proposed by the Lake Huron Centre for Coastal Conservation, be supported. I just wanted to get that on the record for those watching at home so they can catch up to the debate.

With respect to some of the qualifications the member spoke about, we always want to praise those people who want to gather in our communities to help us have clean-



er beaches in our areas. This is proposed by her riding. It's a good plan. What can you say that we cannot praise and we cannot encourage? This is what we want to do, encourage and educate people about the need to work together to have a cleaner environment. I certainly have a lot of wonderful areas in my riding of Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock, beaches along my rivers and lakes, some right in the downtown sectors. Bobcaygeon and Fenelon Falls have public beaches. I know Fenelon Falls had a bit of a problem last year with their public beach, but we're going to be open for business, we hope, this year.

**Mr. Jeff Leal:** I've got to tell you, they love that in Kinmount.

**Ms. Laurie Scott:** Yes, the member from Peterborough always likes to engage in conversation: We certainly have a lovely beach area in Kinmount, in a park area, a rehabilitation that I can say was community driven by the Austin Sawmill, and their family, and how that cleanup has occurred. It's a beautiful park that they all bike, and the trails go through. So that's good.

We had a little bit of a tough issue last year. I'll remind the members about the carp issue and the challenging time that invoked in our waters when we had many factors aligning. We had a large carp die-off and they washed up on shores and beaches and went through many of our lake systems on the Trent system. It was great that the community—the permanent residents, the cottage owners who are seasonal, the municipality—worked very hard. We were hoping for a little bit more assistance from MNR, but they did what they could with the resources they had to help clean up the issue and not affect our tourism. The health unit was involved. An unpleasant situation, it took a while to clean it up, but as I have mentioned, everyone came together and worked really hard at disposing of the carp issue.

The member for Huron-Bruce mentioned in her remarks the importance of stewardship, and I'd like to comment for the hard-working farmers. I know she has many in her riding, as I have in mine. They're certainly the stewards of the land. Obviously, they want to do the best practices possible on their land. They reap their income, or they try to these days, from the resources of the land, and they are great environmental stewards. They want to work with government. I know there are a lot of regulations out there that certainly make it a little more difficult. A program that the member from Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant often talks about is the ALUS program, more of the carrot-engaging education approach, whereas the last few years the farmers have felt it has been regulation and more hammers. I think that's just something we need to keep in mind.

The member for London-Fanshawe brought up the Clean Water Act. Many of us in the Legislature this morning were on tour with the Clean Water Act. The points that were made—and a lot came out, especially in Peterborough, which certainly was the closest hearing that we have to my riding. A lot of what was brought forward—and they were correct—was the downloading on

to the municipalities. They're saying source water protection should be a provincial responsibility, so we want to make clear that the studies go out, the committees are set up. We're hoping that the government watches very closely, because we felt, and the municipalities certainly felt, it was another download on to the municipalities and it really should have been the provincial responsibility for source water protection. We fought that battle many times here, but I just wanted to highlight that again it was more of a stick approach, not the carrot approach that we would like to see, especially in rural Ontario.

I know my colleague for Simcoe-Grey wants to speak in a few minutes, so I'll start to wrap up. The last couple of Auditor General's reports have been titled *Neglecting Our Obligations and Reconciling Our Priorities*. There are some good points in both of those. It speaks to this bill we're supportive of. Why would you not be supportive of this private member's resolution coming before us this morning? But the Liberal government really has to have some accurate policies and make the environment more of a priority than it has in a lot of respects. There are a lot of priorities in the environment out there. Today we're supporting the resolution brought forward by the member for Huron-Bruce.

1130

**M<sup>me</sup> France Gélinas:** The Lake Huron Centre for Coastal Conservation does important work protecting and restoring the Lake Huron coastal environment and promoting a healthy coast system. New Democrats support these goals, not just in regard to Lake Huron, but with respect to all lakes across Ontario.

The Lake Huron Centre for Coastal Conservation fait un travail important afin de protéger et de restaurer l'environnement riverain du lac Huron et de faire la promotion d'un écosystème riverain sain et en santé. Nous, les néo-démocrates, appuyons et faisons la promotion de ces buts, pas seulement pour le lac Huron mais pour tous nos lacs en Ontario.

It is for those reasons that we have taken such a strong stance against the actions of the McGuinty Liberal government which have put our lakes in jeopardy. One such example is the infamous Highway 404 extension in northern York region.

Nous, les néo-démocrates, nous sommes opposés avec vigueur contre les actions du gouvernement McGuinty qui mettent nos lacs en péril. Un bon exemple est la fameuse extension de l'autoroute 404 au nord de la région de York.

This \$250-million extension of Highway 404 carves through the greenbelt and will fuel sprawl along the northern boundary of south Simcoe county. Mr. Speaker, \$250 million would protect and restore a lot of degraded lakes and shorelines in Ontario, including Lake Huron and Lake Simcoe.

Le gouvernement dépense présentement 250 \$ millions pour l'extension de l'autoroute 404, 250 \$ millions qui pourraient être utilisés pour protéger et restaurer plusieurs de nos lacs, de nos environnements riverains du



lac Huron, du lac Simcoe, et, laissez-moi ajouter, du lac Simon, du lac Charles et du lac Kelly.

In my riding, hundreds of constituents are meeting regularly to try to restore and protect Kelly Lake, Simon Lake, Mud Lake, McCharles Lake. Every summer, all of those lakes are so full of algae that you could walk across them. The people have gotten together, pooled their resources, and have tried everything. They've tried raking the algae out and letting it dry on the beach; that didn't work. Then the next year, Science North helped us a little bit by giving us one of their scientists. They thought that bales of barley could help. So here we are putting chicken wire around bales of barley, and Javex bottles to make them float, to try to protect the shores of all those lakes—mainly Simon Lake and McCharles Lake. It helped a bit, but by the end of summer the lake was green again. They've banned fertilizer completely. Nobody on the shores of those lakes or the feeders will use fertilizer, but to no avail.

There are solutions, but those solutions take money. They turned to the municipalities. Well, the municipalities are having a tough time balancing their books right now. With all of the downloading of provincially mandated programs that are now being funded by our municipalities, they don't have the cash to help people who want to improve their lakes, who want to do the type of work that the member is suggesting happen in our ridings. In the riding of Nickel Belt, people would like those environmental projects to take place, but the municipalities can't help, and the provincial government is not helping either. But we have \$250 million being invested in a project that would actually be detrimental to Lake Simcoe and they have no problem with that.

Dans mon comté, nous avons une série de lacs qui commence avec le lac Kelly. Ça s'en va dans le lac Mud, ça s'en va dans le lac Simon, puis le lac McCharles. À chaque été, le lac devient plein d'une espèce d'algue bleue-verte qui remplit le lac. On dirait vraiment que tu pourrais marcher sur l'eau comme dans la Bible. Les gens qui demeurent dans mon comté, les gens de Nickel Belt, se sont rassemblés, ont tenu des réunions publiques, et ont essayé une série d'options.

La première option, c'est que tout le monde a raclé les algues. On les a raclés sur la plage pour essayer de les laisser sécher et voir si cela pourrait aider. Ça n'a pas aidé. L'année suivante, Science Nord nous a aidés avec un de leurs travailleurs qui s'y connaît beaucoup en écosystèmes riverains, et il nous a proposé d'y mettre des balles d'orge. Donc, on a mis de la broche à poulet autour des grosses balles et on les a mises sur la glace en hiver avec des bouteilles pour savoir où elles étaient. À l'arrivée du printemps, tout ça a coulé au fond du lac. Cela aidait un peu à enlever des algues, mais il y en avait encore beaucoup. Tous les gens sur la rive ont arrêté d'utiliser des fertilisants pour être sûrs que ça ne se retrouve pas dans le lac, mais ça ne marche pas. C'était des solutions que les gens ensemble pouvaient faire. Cela n'a pas marché.

**Mr. Michael A. Brown:** I am delighted to be able to stand here today and support this significant and important resolution put forward by my friend the member for Huron—Bruce, a member who has shown great interest in the health of the Great Lakes and a member who has shown great interest in the opportunities that the Great Lakes provide all of us who share a coast on Lake Huron.

In my particular constituency of Algoma—Manitoulin, I have the pleasure of representing the largest coast in all of Ontario. My coastline goes from about halfway across Lake Superior, through to Sault Ste. Marie, and all around the north shore of Lake Huron. It includes all the shoreline for Manitoulin Island, Cockburn Island and St. Joseph Island. It includes many of the islands in Georgian Bay.

For my friend from the official opposition who didn't understand "coast," I'm sure that his friend from Halton might remind him of the Great Lakes Heritage Coast, which describes most of my constituency.

About 75% of the coastline in my constituency is protected, either through a provincial park, a federal park or a First Nation. Less than 25% of the coastline within the constituency is actually in private hands. It is important for us to preserve this. This is the largest single repository of fresh water in the world. This is important for us to do, and it is important for us to understand what the member is proposing. She is proposing a volunteer program. This is not big government in action; this is community volunteers who will develop and encourage beach stewardship.

A candidate beach will have a beach stewardship committee of local people who are interested in looking after their particular beach. It seems to make great sense in the rural areas. As the member has said, there are restrictions on what a small municipality, a small group of people in a county or a district, can do. They can't beat the standards of the Blue Flag program, but they can demonstrate to local residents, to the tourists who visit all of the Lake Huron coastline, to those who come and spend time along the Lake Huron coastline at their summer residences, that it is an important thing to do.

I commend the member for this very, very important resolution today; I think that it deserves the support of all members here.

**Mr. Jim Wilson:** I'm also delighted to stand for a few minutes and to recognize the work that the member for Huron—Bruce is doing to promote the green ribbon beach program. Contrary to what one of my other colleagues said, that it was fluff, I think it's a great program. He made a point that there are other things to debate, but this is private members' hour and a great opportunity for her to come forward and to promote Lake Huron, the part of the Great Lakes that she represents.

Of course, I want to spend a couple of minutes thanking the government for the \$100,000 to market Wasaga Beach, which we received last week. We did have a fire that removed many of the historic buildings going back to the 1940s, but I want people to know that the buildings have all been demolished. There's a clean slate there. We



look forward to new and exciting times at Wasaga Beach, in terms of redeveloping, and we have a lot of proposals.

1140

I want to thank the very able council, led by Mayor Cal Patterson, who have taken a very sensible approach not only toward marketing Wasaga Beach for the summer season coming up, but also toward dealing with the requests from developers and really involving the community; and the committee led by Bonnie Smith, our economic development officer, under the auspices of the economic development committee of council, is moving forward, involving the community, and making sure that we not only get the message out that we're open for business on the world's longest fresh-water beach—and I think it would be fantastic to at some point be able to designate parts of this beach under the green ribbon program. It can't hurt. It's another way to put Wasaga Beach and other beaches on the map. I think it would be great for tourism. When people look at a tourism guide in the future and they may be able to see the designation of a green ribbon, they'll know it's a clean beach that's protected, that volunteers care about it, that the world-famous Wasaga dunes are protected, and the long grasses and bushes that help to avoid erosion along the Great Lakes. Those are world ecosystems and they need to be protected. A green ribbon designation, I think, would go some way towards that.

So again, congratulations and thank you. This is the first time in my 17½ years that a member of an opposing party actually gave me their speech to read. Unfortunately, I don't have enough time, but very good speech-writing there, I'll say to Carol Mitchell.

I just want to say I hope there will be some money coming to those municipalities that decide to participate in this program. They won't be able to do it on their own.

Finally, I just want to say that today is a good step in recognizing what volunteers can do and what a program can do to put you on the map, as I said, but the Great Lakes water levels are a very, very serious issue. Not a week goes by where, I'm sure for all of us who are around the Great Lakes, our constituents don't mention to us that they're very concerned. The real estate agents up in Wasaga Beach will tell you, "We're selling mud rather than beach right now." Certainly in my 15 years—almost 16 years—of living in Wasaga Beach, raised in Alliston, I've never seen the levels so low. That's something the government needs to address, with the federal government.

**Mr. Jeff Leal:** Indeed, I appreciate the opportunity to speak about the resolution here today from my colleague from Huron-Bruce. I certainly know that she has been a real leader in water quality and restoration of beaches in her community for many, many years.

I'd like to get on the record this morning that previous to her election here in 2003, she is the only person in the 100-year history of Huron county to have two terms as a warden. During those two years that she was the warden of Huron county, this was one of the key issues that she put forward—this whole issue of stewardship, making

sure that beaches were in top quality, that indeed all of the community that surrounds the area of Huron-Bruce has an opportunity to get access to beaches, that her citizens and all citizens of Ontario know that they can be very, very safe and rely on the water quality at those beaches.

You might ask why a member from Peterborough would be supporting this resolution. Interestingly enough, I like to give credit where credit is due: to the Honourable John Baird, the federal Minister of the Environment. About a year ago, he launched a study to review the Trent-Severn system in east-central Ontario. The Trent-Severn system, of course, starts in Trenton, Ontario, and works its way up through to Port Severn, which drains into Georgian Bay, an integral part of the ecological system in eastern and east-central Ontario. One of the individuals who has been part of that panel, that study, was the founding president of Trent University, Tom Symons. Through a whole series of public round tables over the last number of months—and I understand this report will be coming forward in the not-too-distant future—beach quality and the quality of water through the Trent-Severn system as it enters both into Lake Ontario and to Lake Huron via Georgian Bay was a topic of great discussion.

We know that the proposal we have here this morning is a volunteer approach. It will allow for that call to arms for people in those communities. We all know that part of our legacy to future generations is to provide an environment that is of pristine quality. Part of that environment, of course, is water quality, and associated with that is beach quality. I know the member from Huron-Bruce, through various conferences in her community, is certainly taking this initiative forward. She is taking that message to the various communities in the riding of Huron-Bruce and actively seeking out those volunteers who will, when the call to arms is put out, come forward because they know this is an important thing to do.

In 2007, Peter Lougheed predicted that the United States will be coming after our fresh water in three to five years. So we know that there is a real challenge, a real responsibility for us here in Ontario to make sure that water quality within the five Great Lakes, and water quality in all our systems across the province, affords those tourism opportunities and provides those opportunities for high-quality water that you and I can enjoy each and every day.

This is a very serious issue, and all members of this House should be on board to support this resolution.

**Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn:** It's a pleasure to join the debate. I'll say right from the outset, I'm a very strong supporter of this resolution that has been put forward by the member for Huron-Bruce. I think if any member of the House has ever had the opportunity, or has not availed themselves of the opportunity to go and see a sunset in the town of Southampton, Ontario—everybody should experience that at least once in their life. I've seen it on a number of occasions and every time I see it, it's like I'm seeing it again for the first time.



There are a few things I think all members in this House would agree with, and that is the legacy we pass on, from an environmental sense, to our children. There are a few basic things. I think we'd all agree that children should be allowed to walk in the woods in the future. If you extend that, you would say that children should also be allowed to play on the beach and that children should be allowed to swim in the water that adjoins that beach. I'm sad to say that in my own town of Oakville—we have some wonderful beaches—children aren't allowed to swim in the water. Children aren't allowed to go in the water and on the beaches in Oakville because of activities that have taken place in recent years. Under all three parties, activities have taken place that have harmed that water, and we haven't done enough to protect that resource.

I was fortunate, before I became an MPP, to serve 18 years as a member of regional council. One of the things that afflicted the Lake Ontario shoreline in Oakville was algae. We had a huge algae problem, algae washing ashore and rotting on the beaches, washing up on the shoreline and rotting and smelling, disturbing the normal activity that you would see along a lakeshore or beach. We're starting to see that in other areas of the province now.

I chaired a committee called the Lake Ontario Shoreline Algae Action Advisory Committee. It came up with a number of great recommendations, working with the Canada Centre for Inland Waters and with the University of Waterloo. We're starting to see the same initiatives now taking place in Lake Simcoe.

When you look at the importance of the issue, when you look at the importance of this resource to the future of our province, both economically and recreationally, from a sport fishing and commercial fishing point of view, there are a number of very important reasons why all members should be supportive of this resolution that is put forward.

Once again, I'd like to thank the member for bringing it forward because it gives us a chance to talk about environmental issues as well. At the same time, you can see where you can make a successful program, such as a blue flag program in the urban areas, which has been, by one member's admission, a very successful program. You can adapt that to the rural areas and make it even more successful in the areas that simply don't have the facilities or the amenities that you would find in an urban area.

I heard the remarks—and I thought they were excellent remarks. I want to compliment the member for Simcoe–Grey. I think private members' time is a time where you can put some of the partisan politics aside and you can speak on behalf of your own constituents. Certainly, I thought the remarks that he came forward with, after some of the remarks by other members of his party, were a saving grace, and he deserves to be complimented for them.

I know in my own riding, for example, in recent elections, the third party isn't the NDP any more. The

third party in the riding of Oakville is now the Green Party. The NDP is now the fourth party. When you look at the type of debate that is taking place, when choices are being made about environmental issues, those people who are engaged in those issues look to two parties to provide them with the sort of debate and the sort of choices they're looking for. One, of course, is the Liberal Party, to which I belong, and the other is now the Green Party. I think in my riding and I think in a number of other progressive ridings, the issue of the environment has certainly risen to the fore.

When you see a resolution that is drafted the way this one is, in a very sensible way, in a practical way, involving an organization with the credibility of environmental defence, it's worthy of support of all members of the House. So, in closing, I would like to compliment the mover, and I would also like to urge all members of this House to give their utmost support when the vote is taken.

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier):** Ms. Mitchell, you have up to two minutes to respond.

**Mrs. Carol Mitchell:** I want to thank all the speakers today, but I just want to make a very short comment about the comments that were made today. I'm very disappointed in the member for Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington. I think it's very unfortunate that one does not understand the difference between rural and urban communities. We rely on our strong volunteer base; we rely on our grassroots community. It's unfortunate that he simply doesn't get it. I'm going to let it go at that.

But that's it. The other members, the kind words, the recommendations that you've made, strengthening the green ribbon program, I thank you for that. The member for Simcoe–Grey: Quite frankly, I found your comments refreshing and I wanted to make special note. I thank you for that.

The member for Beaches–East York as well. I want to remind the member for Beaches–East York that we have two Blue Flag designations in the riding of Huron–Bruce. We want to work the two programs together, which I know the member understands, but I just want to strongly reinforce it: We simply don't have the resources to do Blue Flag in all of our communities, but my communities want to work together because they understand that a strong ecosystem is the future for our riding.

Mr. Speaker, I have the distinct honour of having my daughter here today. I want to recognize my daughter Jas. For all of you who have heard me talk repeatedly, this is the one who's the chef, who keeps me eating better now.

For all those who spoke, I really do sincerely appreciate it. This is a very important initiative in the riding of Huron–Bruce. We want to ensure that our coastline is there to enjoy and to prosper for years to come.

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier):** There being no further debate, the members will note that we're a little bit ahead in schedule this morning. In private members' public business, other members can expect the vote to take place at noon. In that case, I will suspend

proceedings until 12 o'clock, at which time we will deal with the two ballot items.

*The House suspended proceedings from 1152 to 1200.*

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier):** Thank you for your patience and understanding.

## POVERTY PAUVRETÉ

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier):** The time allowed for private members' public business having expired, we'll deal first with private members' notice of motion number 22, standing in the name of Ms. Aggelonitis.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?  
Carried.

*Agreed to.*

## WATER QUALITY QUALITÉ DE L'EAU

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier):** We shall now deal with private members' notice of motion number 23, standing in the name of Mrs. Mitchell.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?  
Carried.

*Agreed to.*

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier):** All matters relating to private members' public business having been dealt with, I do now leave the chair, and the House will resume at 1:30 of the clock.

*The House recessed from 1201 to 1330.*

## MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

### WILFRID LAURIER UNIVERSITY

**Mr. Ted Chudleigh:** I rise today to pledge my enthusiastic support for the proposed expansion of Wilfrid Laurier University to Milton. A satellite campus on a beautiful 150-acre plot of land near the Niagara Escarpment—and that will be part of a 450-acre development—would be beneficial to many people. Students would be able to learn in a natural and modern setting, benefiting from Milton's quaint yet cosmopolitan charm. The town of Milton would inherit of burst of youthful energy and the incentive to develop a modern and sustainable student village. The construction, maintenance and operation of the campus would create many local jobs for the residents of Halton, bringing new commercial opportunities within and without the university.

Truly, I can think of nothing more fitting for this rapidly growing community than the presence of an established and reputable university like Wilfrid Laurier. I encourage both the university and the town of Milton to

come to an agreement as quickly as possible, and I expect significant support from this government in the future.

### HILLIARD GREEN

**Ms. Lisa MacLeod:** There are times in this job when you have to say farewell to a friend, a friend who provided you support when you first started out, a friend who saw your community for what it could be, not just what it is. Nepean–Carleton recently lost a good friend, on March 3, when Hilliard Green departed this life for his great reward.

Hilliard saw something in me when I was just 30 years old. He was one of the first people to believe that I could be a member of provincial Parliament, so he made that happen, just as he has done for so many other provincial and federal Conservatives in Nepean–Carleton throughout his lifetime.

Hilliard succumbed to the dreaded cancer. His battle with the disease was even more stressful when his beloved wife, May, passed away from the very same illness two years before he did. He was a good man. His farm, Abby Hill Farms, has some of the best sweet corn around, though I privately prefer the apples during the fall. Hilliard was a big Ottawa Senators fan and he was ever the horseman, showing his horses at the Royal Agricultural Winter Fair, among other venues. Hilliard also loved the Richmond Fair. He was a director and a former president there. He knew everyone in Richmond, and when I first started out as a politician, it was there that he and others gave me my start.

Hilliard leaves behind two sons, Neil and Graham, and his mother, Fern. He also leaves behind several in-laws in the Preston family who loved him like a brother.

Nepean–Carleton lost one of its finest on March 3, and for that I'm sad, but I will forever be grateful for having known Hilliard Green.

### SHERIDAN INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY AND ADVANCED LEARNING

**Mrs. Amrit Mangat:** I rise to inform this House about a recent visit Minister Smitherman and I made to the Sheridan Institute of Technology and Advanced Learning. Sheridan's Davis campus recently opened its new Centre for Healthy Communities, a unique facility that brings together innovative wellness and community safety disciplines in one location. This centre will train students to become personal support workers, security officers, pharmacy technicians, practical nurses and experts in health promotion.

Our government's strategic investment in Sheridan has not only improved access to post-secondary education in Peel, but it has also created jobs in my riding of Mississauga–Brampton South. Our government understands that in order to create the workforce of tomorrow, we need to invest in education and skills training today. That is why in last week's budget we proposed \$1.5 billion for



skills training through the skills-to-jobs action plan. We want to ensure that more Ontarians have access to student aid, apprenticeship training and well-paying jobs.

I would like to thank the staff and students at Sheridan for their warm welcome, and I'm very proud to have the centre in my riding. I look forward to continuing to work with Sheridan to ensure that our government continues to invest in our students.

### TOWN OF CALEDON

**Ms. Sylvia Jones:** Today I'm pleased to rise to inform all members of the Legislature about an honour that was recently bestowed on the town of Caledon, in my riding of Dufferin-Caledon. Maclean's magazine, in their March 24 issue, named the town of Caledon the safest place to live in Canada. The "safest place to live" designation is based on per capita crime data from the Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics. I would like to ask all members of the House to congratulate the town of Caledon on receiving this recognition.

I would especially like to acknowledge the work of the Caledon OPP and the volunteers who serve with the Policing Advisory Council of Caledon. There has always been outstanding community support for the Road Watch, Citizens on Patrol and Youth Leadership programs. Hundreds of volunteers have dedicated many hours to making Caledon a safe community to live, work and raise a family.

Mayor Marolyn Morrison, when asked why Caledon deserved this honour, said, "Our residents get involved in our community; our police listen to our community and we have a wonderful group of volunteers who care and work hard for our community." I couldn't agree more.

Congratulations to Detachment Commander Andy Karski and the Caledon OPP, who serve us so well in Caledon. It really is a very special place to live, and I am proud to acknowledge them in the chamber today.

### ANTI-BULLYING INITIATIVES

**Ms. Cheri DiNovo:** The Toronto Sun last November noted that Ajax teen Shaquille Wisdom hanged himself after being viciously cyber-bullied by classmates about being gay. Bullying of LGBTTIQ teens is well documented. Due to prevailing homophobia and harassment, gay teens are 14 times more likely to attempt suicide than other teens and have a death rate three times higher than other teens. Egale Canada says that LGBTTIQ teens are more likely to be threatened with weapons, drop out because of harassment, and feel forced to leave home because of conflict.

Today I stand demanding action on behalf of at-risk children from the McGuinty government. We need assurance immediately that programs for equity education, anti-bullying programs and disciplinary programs be instituted before another death occurs. The Toronto board of education has pioneered equity education and anti-

homophobia programs. These need to be applied province-wide now—not sometime, not never, but now.

I want to thank Egale Canada for advancing equality and justice for LGBTTIQ people and their families and Joanne Cohen of the Bruce E. Walker Law Office for their tireless advocacy in this regard.

### CANCER AWARENESS MONTH

**Mr. Kim Craiton:** This week marks the start of the Canadian Cancer Society's Cancer Awareness and Daffodil Month throughout our province.

Today, two in five Ontarians will develop cancer at some point in their lives. This is much more than a statistic, as some of us are acutely aware. That fact represents thousands of cancer stories. These stories motivate over 15,000 Ontario volunteers to go door to door to sell daffodils in the month of April to deliver hope to our constituents.

Since the daffodil campaign began 50 years ago, the Canadian Cancer Society has made significant progress in the fight against cancer through research, education, advocacy, and assistance to those living with cancer. Today, 60% of people diagnosed with cancer will survive the disease, compared with just 33% a few decades ago. Early detection is a plus, and the daffodil campaign certainly helps the society get that message out.

As a cancer survivor, I ask all Ontarians, when a volunteer comes to your door, to not only buy a daffodil but to thank them for their tremendous service to our community, for what they do is important.

The cancer society has sent a letter out to each member, along with a daffodil pin to wear during the month. I'm proud to ask the House to give permission to each of the members to wear the daffodil pin in the House to recognize the month of April.

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** The member seeks unanimous support to wear the daffodil pin in recognition of cancer. Agreed? Agreed.

### CANCER SCREENING

**Mr. Shafiq Qaadri:** As you'll be aware, prostate cancer is the most common type of cancer found in men today, affecting mostly men over the age of 50. Knowing this, I'm particularly pleased that our budget proposed to cover the cost of the prostate-specific antigen test, more commonly referred to as the PSA test, which is used to diagnose and monitor treatment of prostate cancer. It is the blood test that helps detect cancer, and it has now finally received funding.

The coverage of these tests was one part of the three-year, \$154-million investment to build on the province's cancer screening program, to increase early detection and treatment of a number of conditions, including breast, cervical and colorectal cancers; as well as extending the HPV, or human papillomavirus, vaccination program.

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The coverage of the PSA tests was also welcome news to my colleagues across the floor, and I'm happy to put on the record some comments. On the topic of PSA testing being covered, for example, the member from Simcoe North, in a rare moment of candour, said: "It is nice, and I want to give the government credit." The member from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke, in a welcome moment of collegiality, said, "This has proven to be a critical diagnostic tool in this day and age ... and I am happy to see this cost being covered."

I couldn't agree more, and I commend the McGuinty government and Minister Smitherman for this initiative.

#### PALLIATIVE CARE

**Mr. Joe Dickson:** I rise today to speak to one of the many highlights of last week's budget.

As part of the funding for our health and long-term-care system, this government proposed an investment of \$14 million in 2007-08 for 10 residential hospices across the province. The funding will provide end-of-life care in a home-like environment for patients who cannot be cared for at home.

I know I'm not the only one who is pleased with this investment. When commenting on the \$969,000 in funding towards capital costs for Sakura House in his riding, the member from Oxford said: "I'm elated with the amount.... It's a significant achievement and it will allow them to move forward and get construction under way. It's the type of thing we like to see—it's part of the end-of-the-year spending. I'm very happy they saw fit to fund Sakura House. We commend them for that."

The member from Sarnia-Lambton also voiced his satisfaction with the \$1.5-million investment slated for the St. Joseph's Hospice in his riding when he said, "I can't be too negative when we receive funding we asked for."

I couldn't say it better myself. Clearly, this is important funding for a very important purpose, and I'm pleased that our government is making these investments.

#### MUNICIPAL INFRASTRUCTURE

**Mr. Bob Delaney:** Last week's budget announcement included some significant investments in our province's infrastructure.

Ontario's budget proposed a \$1-billion investment for municipal infrastructure in 2007-08, with funding for our roads and bridges, public transit and social housing.

Let me quote from some of the very positive feedback about Ontario's budget. Doug Reycraft, the president of the Association of Municipalities of Ontario, said that he is "extremely pleased to see the investment in infrastructure." He went on to say that "in order to be globally competitive, we need to invest in infrastructure."

In my own city, Mayor Hazel McCallion said, "Investing an additional \$1 billion in municipal infrastructure

means more job creation, sustainable, competitive communities, and a better quality of life for Ontarians."

And perhaps a quote that truly encapsulates these sentiments was made by the mayor of the Township of East Ferris, who was also the PC candidate in the 2007 election from the riding of Nipissing. He said, "The fact that the Ontario government kept their promise; they kept their promise toward infrastructure renewal and like this morning, me getting \$223,000 for my small township ... my taxes are going to be low this year because of the fact that the government has committed to reducing the impact on my taxpayers...."

#### VISITORS

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Members, we have with us today in the Speaker's gallery Mr. Xue He and a delegation from the People's Republic of China. Mr. He is a member and deputy secretary general of the standing committee of Jiangsu Provincial People's Congress. I would like to point out to the members that Jiangsu and Ontario have had a formal friendship accord since 1985. Please join me in welcoming our guests today.

#### ACCESS TO INFORMATION

**Ms. Lisa MacLeod:** On a point of privilege, Mr. Speaker: Further to section 21(a) to (d) of the Legislative Assembly standing orders, I filed a point of privilege with respect to the privileges and rights—

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** I want to thank the member for the notice that she did provide me. It wasn't as detailed as I would've liked to have seen, but notwithstanding that, I will allow you to make your point.

**Ms. Lisa MacLeod:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I intend to make my point.

I filed a point of privilege with respect to the privileges—and no disrespect, Mr. Speaker—with respect to the privileges and rights I am afforded as a member of provincial Parliament, and which I feel were suppressed yesterday during the standing committee on government agencies. The circumstances where my privileges and rights as a member were compromised are outlined as follows.

In the resource binder for the standing committee on government agencies provided by the 39th Parliament committees branch, it clearly states on page 24:

"Research officers of the legislative library's research service provide every standing and select committee of the House:

"The research officer:

"—highlights and clarifies central issues before the committee;

"—prepares briefing papers for the committee members;

"—suggests expert witnesses and possible lines of questioning;



- “—provides legal analyses of issues before the committee;
- “—summarizes submissions made to the committee;
- “—provides oral briefings to the committee;
- “—drafts interim and final committee reports to the House.”

After I requested a deferral to determine whether or not I would add my voice to a committee concurrence of the intended appointee, a request was made by the third party, supported by the official opposition, for more information regarding the intended appointee.

Specifically, the third party requested to have the legislative researcher to have “research to concur with the answers the candidate has provided,” after there seemed to be a discrepancy between some of the background information circulated by the clerk’s office and the testimony by the intended appointee.

This request was stifled when government members of the committee put forth the following motion: “That the opposition request for legislative research to investigate the truthfulness of Mr. Anand’s responses be put to a vote.”

As the committee resource binder clearly states: “The research officer highlights and clarifies central issues before the committee.”

In this case, the government, through its motion, attempted to muzzle the opposition in our attempt to receive reasonable, open-source and public information in order to make the best possible decision. Ultimately, because we felt pressured by the government, the opposition withdrew its request.

I never want to be put in that position again. After all, it is the rules in this place that protects the minority from the tyranny of the majority.

As it clearly states on page 5, the mandate of the committee is “to review the intended appointments made by order in council of persons to ABCs of the Ontario government. The committee may select for review intended appointees, determine whether or not it concurs in the intended appointment and then report its concurrence to the House.”

Under standing order 106(e)(8), it states: “At the conclusion of the meeting held to review an intended appointment, the committee shall determine whether or not it concurs in the intended appointment. Any member may request that the committee defer its determination to the next committee, but in the event no later than seven calendar days. In its report, the committee shall state whether or not it concurs with the intended appointments and may state its reasons.”

The request made by the opposition was made to clarify the information circulated by the clerk’s office and the statements made by the intended appointee, so that committee members could make the best possible decisions on behalf of the residents of Ontario and, as in standing order 106(e)(8), the reasons for concurrence or not.

It is my opinion that the government’s actions impeded my ability, as well as other members of the commit-

tee, to effectively act as a member of provincial Parliament because they put into question the opposition’s right to request the legislative researchers to “highlight and clarify a central issue before the committee” so that we can properly share our reasoning of concurrence or not.

As members of the standing committee on government agencies, it is our responsibility to receive accurate and truthful information pertaining to all intended appointees, review and evaluate this information to make sure the intended appointees are capable and qualified for the positions they seek, and vote accordingly. The actions of the government yesterday are clearly not in the spirit of the standing orders, the committee resource binder or of our democracy.

I do urge you to rule in favour of the “right to know” for all members of this Legislature, which will help us all do our jobs. The very foundation of our democracy is the right for the governing party to set out an agenda, the right of the opposing parties to ask questions, and the right of legislative staff to provide unfiltered, unbiased and independent advice.

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** I want to thank the member again for providing me with the proper written notice under section 21(c) of the standing orders. I want to take the opportunity to review the Hansard of the member’s comments today. With that, I will reserve my decision until next week, and I thank you for that.

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## INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

### PROVINCIAL ANIMAL WELFARE ACT, 2008

#### LOI ONTARIENNE DE 2008 SUR LE BIEN-ÊTRE DES ANIMAUX

Mr. Bartolucci moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 50, An Act to amend the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act / Projet de loi 50, Loi modifiant la Loi sur la Société de protection des animaux de l’Ontario.

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Is it the pleasure of the House the motion carry? Carried.

*First reading agreed to.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** The member for a short statement?

**Hon. Rick Bartolucci:** Mr. Speaker, I’ll make a statement during ministerial statements.

PEACE OFFICERS' MEMORIAL DAY  
AND MEMORIAL ACT, 2008  
LOI DE 2008  
SUR LE JOUR DE COMMÉMORATION  
DES AGENTS DE LA PAIX  
ET LE MONUMENT COMMÉMORATIF  
À LEUR MÉMOIRE

Mr. Levac moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 51, An Act to proclaim Peace Officers' Memorial Day and to honour peace officers who have died in the line of duty / *Projet de loi 51, Loi proclamant le Jour de commémoration des agents de la paix et rendant hommage aux agents de la paix décédés dans l'exercice de leurs fonctions.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Is it the pleasure of the House the motion carry? Carried.

*First reading agreed to.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** The member for a short statement?

**Mr. Dave Levac:** The bill provides for the declaration of a Peace Officers' Memorial Day on the third Sunday in September of each year in the province of Ontario. The bill will also require that a memorial be established in or adjacent to the legislative precincts of the Legislative Assembly to honour the memory of peace officers who have died in the line of duty.

It's important to memorialize, maintain the peace officers in the name of peace for peace. The introduction of this bill will record the lives of those who have died on duty for future generations to remember. For over 100 years, peace officers have been committed to keeping our citizens safe. Quite frankly, with the introduction of this bill, our peace officers will no longer be forgotten. I appreciate it, Mr. Speaker, and I know that you're going to introduce very important guests in the gallery today.

## STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

### ANIMAL PROTECTION

**Hon. Rick Bartolucci:** I rise today to introduce legislation to better protect animals against mistreatment and abuse. This legislation represents the first significant revisions to the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act since 1919.

As I look up into the gallery today, I am pleased to welcome a number of representatives from various partner groups, who have been instrumental in the crafting of this legislation. From the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, we have Kate MacDonald and Hugh Coghill. They are joined today by inspectors Alison McAllister, Ruth Marks, Mindy Hall, Scott Sylvia, Richard Mugridge, Connie Mallory, Darren Grandel, Kevin Strooband and Todd Menard.

From the World Society for the Protection of Animals is Melissa Tkachyk. Also in the gallery this afternoon are Angela Cerovic and Doug Raven of the Ontario Veterinary Medical Association, and Susan Carlyle and Karen Smythe for the College of Veterinarians of Ontario.

This is an important day for animals and animal lovers, and I am proud that these individuals could join us.

If passed, the proposed Provincial Animal Welfare Act would provide better protection for animals throughout Ontario, including those in zoos.

Sadly, this protection is necessary. While most people enjoy and respect all animals and treat their pets as part of the family, it is not uncommon to hear of acts of uncaring individuals who exploit or harm defenceless animals: the puppy AK, found whimpering on a balcony with his ears cut off; the kangaroo Tyson, held in deplorable conditions in a roadside zoo; animals trained to fight as a sport.

In Ontario, these acts, these cruelties, will not be tolerated. If passed, the amendments to the OSPCA Act would offer the strongest animal protection in Canada. It would give the Ontario SPCA agents the right to inspect places other than a residence where animals are kept for entertainment, exhibition, sale or hire; let the agents enter premises where they have reasonable grounds to believe an animal is in immediate distress; and require veterinarians to report suspected abuse and protect them from liability for doing so.

Further, the legislation would make it an offence to train an animal to fight another animal, cause distress to an animal or fail to comply with standards of care. And it would give judges the flexibility they need to impose the stiff penalties that these actions deserve.

Our government is committed to a strong animal welfare system in Ontario. Last year, we more than quadrupled funding to the OSPCA, to \$500,000 annually, to support its important work. This was the first increase in many years. We provided \$100,000 for zoo inspections, and we recognized the need to strengthen and modernize the act. Earlier this week, we provided \$5 million to improve and modernize the OSPCA's infrastructure across the province.

Today, I want to thank the OSPCA, the College of Veterinarians of Ontario and other concerned organizations for taking part in consultations to help us prepare this legislation.

I also want to take this opportunity to thank my colleague David Zimmer, a strong advocate for animal protection, who last December received the World Society for the Protection of Animals' special award for leadership in animal welfare for his private member's bill. This legislation we introduced today builds upon his bill and takes it even further.

I would also like to thank my colleague Mike Colle. Mike has been dedicated to animal welfare rights for many, many years.

I also want to recognize and thank Julia Munro and Bob Runciman for their commitment to animal welfare in Ontario.



There are innumerable people and facilities across Ontario dedicated to the protection and well-being of the animals in their care in every community of this province. If passed, this legislation would have no impact at all on this majority who treat animals with kindness and concern. It would, however, allow the OSPCA to take action against those who don't, prevent those acts of abuse that are appalling to us all, and allow us to better protect animals across our province.

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## CORPORATE TAX IMPÔT DES SOCIÉTÉS

**Hon. Monique M. Smith:** The McGuinty government wants to help businesses do what they do best: create jobs and foster a strong economy. We believe that a streamlined, efficient and effective tax administration system is an important way to support those goals.

En ma qualité de ministre du Revenu, je prends aujourd'hui la parole pour informer la Chambre que notre gouvernement maintient ses engagements à l'égard des Ontariens et Ontariennes et envers les entreprises de la province en apportant des changements de grande envergure au système d'administration de l'impôt des sociétés en Ontario—des changements qui se traduiront par des économies de coûts considérables pour les entreprises.

Beginning this month, through an agreement that we have negotiated with the federal government and the Canada Revenue Agency, Ontario corporations will start seeing compliance cost savings from integrated audits, rulings, objections and appeals for all pre-2009 taxation years.

Plus particulièrement, à compter d'aujourd'hui même, les entreprises de l'Ontario traiteront dorénavant avec une seule autorité pour chacune de ces fonctions. Cette étape initiale sera suivie de l'adoption d'une déclaration sur le revenu des sociétés, unique et intégrée, à compter de l'année prochaine.

Going forward, Ontario businesses will have only one corporate tax return, one corporate tax administration and one set of tax rules with which to comply, not two. Through this reduction in administrative overlap and duplication, we estimate that Ontario businesses will save up to \$100 million in compliance costs every year, and a further \$90 million annually in reduced Ontario corporate income tax.

In the words of Len Crispino, president of the Ontario Chamber of Commerce, "Corporate tax harmonization is a big win for Ontario businesses. We estimate that this streamlining will save Ontario businesses \$100 [million] to \$200 million each year in time and money, creating room for more investment in the things like human capital, new equipment and research and development that will make our economy grow."

Judith Andrew, Ontario vice-president of the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, has noted, "This will

save time, hassle and money in the compliance load on small- and medium-sized businesses."

The Toronto Board of Trade has said that this harmonization initiative is "like a \$100-million tax cut for Ontario's businesses," which they expect will stimulate the economy and job creation.

I would like to extend my sincere thanks to the staff at the Ministry of Revenue and the Ministry of Finance, as well as the staff at the Canada Revenue Agency, who are ensuring a smooth transition as we move to the new administrative regime.

Je souhaite par ailleurs exprimer mes sincères remerciements aux membres du personnel des ministères du Revenu et des Finances, ainsi qu'à celui de l'Agence du revenu du Canada, qui gèrent avec souplesse la transition vers le nouveau système d'administration.

They have done a tremendous job and I'm very grateful for their hard work. I would particularly like to recognize the following people for their leadership in moving this initiative forward: my deputy minister, the incomparable Colin Andersen; the revenue commissioner, Angela Longo; and our project leaders who put in countless hours, Bob Laramy and Marion Crane.

This government, under the leadership of Premier Dalton McGuinty, is committed to creating a competitive environment for Ontario's businesses and taking concrete steps to build a vigorous economy that benefits all Ontarians. This initiative is just the latest example of how we are delivering on our commitments. Thank you.

## ANIMAL PROTECTION

**Mrs. Julia Munro:** I'm pleased to respond on behalf of our party on the bill just introduced on animal protection. I think that there is no one who has not been touched by horrific stories of animal abuse, so that all of us recognize the importance of providing the kind of legislative framework that ensures our animals are protected.

I would also like to welcome those guests who are here today and who have participated in the consultations that the minister referenced.

I also want to recognize, as the minister graciously recognized, the role that members of our caucus have made in this particular initiative. I was always very pleased that the bill I had presented a few years ago passed unanimously in this House. One of the things that is the hallmark of any piece of legislation that anyone puts forward is, of course, its ability to stand up to the rigours of the courtroom. It was certainly another milestone, if you like, or achievement to see that we, in this province, were able to prosecute and fines of significance were imposed. As the minister mentioned, my colleague Bob Runciman has also delved into this area, I think as responsible legislators do, recognizing how important it is, borrowing the phrase, to speak for those who cannot speak.

But I want to just raise a couple of issues that I think are ones that the government is going to have to look at.



One of the things is that this bill provides for a great deal to be done by regulation. It's regulation that often creates the friction, if you like, or the burden, the onus on individuals, and so I think we have to be very careful about not casting too broad a net in legislation of this nature, particularly through regulation.

In the moment I have, I want to pick out a couple of areas that I think are ones that should be flagged. The question of taking hobby farms as a specific group is one, again, that I think people are going to have difficulty with. There would be two sets of rules: one for those that are identified as farms, and then others that somebody identifies as a hobby farm. The same animals on those two properties would be covered under different jurisdictions.

The question of warrantless entry: again, something that has to be done—I know the minister mentioned—judiciously; and the question that the animal review board can impose costs even when the party has actually won their case.

I call on the minister to ensure that we have hearings beyond Toronto. Most of these issues are of a rural nature, and it's extremely important that those voices are heard.

#### CORPORATE TAX

**Mr. Tim Hudak:** I thought when the Minister of Revenue stood today she was going to announce that finally the Dalton McGuinty government has seen the light and is reducing the tax burden on working families and businesses in the province of Ontario, but it's hopeful thinking. This ministry was even cancelled by Bob Rae back in 1993. It was resurrected for the sole purpose of squeezing even more tax dollars out of working families and businesses. Ironically, in 1993, Jurassic Park was released. And Dalton McGuinty's prehistoric tax-and-spend policies are driving Ontario to a Dalton McGuinty recession. I say to my friend the minister, we have heard in committee from the Canadian Taxpayers Federation, the CFIB, the Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters, the C.D. Howe Institute; the Fraser Institute, the Ontario Chamber of Commerce, and even a gentleman you recently hired, Roger Martin, at the Institute for Competitiveness and Prosperity. The time has come to reduce the tax burden and stimulate job creation in the province of Ontario.

#### ANIMAL PROTECTION

**Mr. Peter Kormos:** I want to respond to the ministerial statement by the Minister of Community Safety. I want to tell this assembly that we New Democrats were particularly excited about the bill that had been put forward by David Zimmer, the member for Willowdale, in the last Parliament. Indeed, we thought that was a good beginning for a debate and the development of legislation that would address the needs of contemporary Ontario. I remember pleading with the government

House leader to have that bill called so that it could pass and go into committee. Had the government been inclined to accommodate Mr. Zimmer in that way, we'd have legislation now. I say, recalling very clearly the legislative proposal of Mr. Zimmer, we'd have had strong, effective, meaningful legislation for the province of Ontario.

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I've got to tell you, this, which purports to be a major overhaul of the legislation, is far from that. I would have preferred that it was a new bill, a new piece of legislation. You'll understand that, Speaker, because you, in your experience in committee, understand how restricted one is in terms of moving amendments when one is dealing with amendments to existing legislation—and that's what we are offered today—as compared to a complete, new statute. The manner in which the government has put this forward has seriously restricted the way in which this bill can be dealt with and the interests that can be addressed during the course of committee hearings. New Democrats are eager to get to work on this legislation.

The Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals—we've heard from them many times over the course of the years here at Queen's Park—find themselves amongst the poorest of transfer-payment agencies in this province. All of the best legislation in the world, all of the best intentions, come to naught if you don't have enforcement.

Go to any given community in this province; go down where I come from—Welland, Thorold, Pelham, Port Colborne, Wainfleet—and you could have a 2,000-pound gorilla in your backyard, and if it's a Saturday afternoon, the fact is, there aren't animal control personnel there to call to come out to address the matter. That is the simple reality of it. We have not had the personnel in most of smaller-town Ontario to deal with dangerous situations involving animals, sometimes wild animals, that are at loose.

I'm looking forward to the debate. We're looking forward to seeing nimrods, fishers and other outdoors people participating in committee hearings. We're interested in seeing the agricultural community participating in committee hearings. I'm interested in people like Karel Fortyn from down in Welland, who is an acknowledged expert in reptiles and reptile breeding.

Here we are, it isn't a new act; it's amendments to an existing act. New Democrats will make an important contribution to the development of this. We'll do the best we can under the circumstances that the government has presented.

#### CORPORATE TAX

**Mr. Michael Prue:** In response to the Minister of Revenue, she has announced today that what she purports will happen is cost savings to the business community. She has stated that this will come at the compliance cost savings from integrated audits, rulings, objections, appeals pre-2009 taxation years.



But what she also said, hidden in one little, tiny sentence, I think might cause some concern to this Legislature, and that is that there will be a further \$90 million annually in reduced Ontario corporate income tax. I say that this may cause some concern because I remember that when this announcement was first made by her predecessor, people who were auditors in Ontario warned us precisely what was going to happen. They told us that when these two systems were married, there would be a loss of revenue to the people of Ontario, a loss that they estimated at that point as being some \$60 million to \$80 million. And in fact, today the minister has announced that the loss to the people of Ontario is some \$90 million.

That's \$90 million that this government will not have to help those who are poor, \$90 million they will not have to help our schools or our institutions of higher learning, \$90 million they will not have to help our cities and \$90 million they will not have in general revenue for any of the other good purposes to which it might be put.

The Ontario auditors know the case in Ontario. They know where the money can be found and how to save it. And they know that what is going to happen, and this government admits is going to happen now, is that a company located in multiple provinces can report profits wherever the costs are less, so that a company can report profits in Prince Edward Island or New Brunswick or Alberta or wherever, and not in Ontario, and therefore reduce the taxes. That will mean virtually nothing to revenue auditors in Canada because they're looking at the national picture, but it will mean a great deal to the people of Ontario who don't have—

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Thank you.

#### VISITORS

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** I'd like the members to welcome some guests here to the Legislature today on behalf of the member from Brant. I'd like to welcome his guests who are here in the east gallery in support of his private member's bill: Marylee Finkle, Toby Finkle, Kirk Finkle, Lieutenant John Hosegrove, Officer Ron DeMerchant, Louis DeMerchant, Vince Murray, Scott Roberts, Rose Roberts and Adrienne Roberts. Welcome to Queen's Park today.

#### MEMBER'S BIRTHDAY

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** I'd like to take this opportunity as well, on behalf of all members, to wish the member from Mississauga—Brampton South a happy birthday today.

#### MEMBER'S HEALTH

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** This is important: On behalf of all members, we know that one of our colleagues, the Minister of Government and Consumer Services, has undergone some surgery for prostate can-

cer. We wish Ted well. We want Ted to know, if he's watching—I'm sure he is; we know how interested he is—that our thoughts and prayers are with him.

I think the message that Ted sends is one that we need to make sure we deliver to everyone. Ted's message was that he was fortunate that his cancer was caught early. He urged all Ontario men over the age of 50 to have prostate cancer testing done every year. Ted, our prayers go out to you.

#### LEGISLATIVE PAGES

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** I want to take this opportunity to thank this wonderful group of pages. They've provided us with great service over the past three weeks. We thank each and every one of you for your service here to all members during the past three weeks. We wish each of you well in your studies and your future endeavours, and we trust that some of you may be back here one day, sitting in a different seat. All the best, and thank you again.

#### ORAL QUESTIONS

##### ONTARIO ECONOMY

**Mr. Tim Hudak:** My question is to the Premier. Today, the Royal Bank of Canada said that Ontario is being pushed "to the brink of a recession this year." Will the Premier confirm to the House today: Is Ontario facing a Dalton McGuinty recession in 2008?

**Hon. Dalton McGuinty:** Both by inclination and sense of responsibility, I'm much more optimistic than my honourable friend opposite. I haven't heard from a single economist who has projected negative growth for the province of Ontario. Many are projecting modest growth. We ourselves, in our recent budget, forecast growth of around 1.1%. It is modest. We would like our economy to grow at a healthier clip, but given some of the challenges that we have to contend with—my honourable colleague opposite knows these very well, whether we're talking about the dollar, which is now at par; or the price of oil, in the neighbourhood of \$100 a barrel; or a struggling US economy. All of those obviously have an impact on us here in Ontario, as it is having an impact when we talk about the US economy and other parts of the world. But I have every confidence that, working together with Ontarians and our businesses, we will, as we have in the past, see ourselves through the challenge and emerge stronger than ever.

**Mr. Tim Hudak:** The Premier says he has not heard from an economist who has said Ontario is in a recession. I remind you of the heading, "Ontario will be in a recession in the early part of the year," from Desjardins, published March 25, 2008. Yves St-Maurice, deputy chief economist at Desjardins group, said: "Therefore,



Ontario will be in a recession in the early part of the year," referring to 2008.

Obviously, this is something that are you not taking seriously enough, Premier, as we saw in your tax-and-spend budget just two weeks ago. From the Royal Bank report, Premier, it says, "The private sector is in contraction, with declines led by key sectors including forestry, agriculture, manufacturing, finance, insurance and real estate. Some slack emerging in the labour market confirms that the province is gearing down as companies trim operations."

Premier, how could this be more serious? Will you act to stimulate our economy by reducing the tax burden on businesses and working families?

**Hon. Dalton McGuinty:** It's hard, on this side of the House, to understand where our Conservative colleagues are coming from day to day. In fact, even within the confines of a single question period it's sometimes difficult to figure out where they're coming from. On the one hand, they say we should be cutting taxes to the tune of \$5 billion, knowing that 75% of our revenues are devoted by way of expenditures to health care, education and supports for the vulnerable. On the one hand, they tell us to make cuts to those services. On the other hand—and I expect we'll see some of that in this very question period—they'll be asking us to fund various government services within their ridings.

You've got to make a choice. That's what leadership is all about. We've made a choice, on this side of the House. We are in fact helping our struggling business sectors, manufacturing in particular—we're reducing their taxes—but we insist on doing it in a way that does not compromise the quality of public services that Ontario families are entitled to rely on.

1420

**Mr. Tim Hudak:** Premier, the day after the Desjardins report, your finance minister was asked five times by the media here at Queen's Park if Ontario was already in a recession, and five times he refused to directly answer that question. I wonder what kind of information he's sitting on—obviously something the Royal Bank has seen, when it's saying that Ontario is on the brink of a recession. Even Roger Martin, whom you've hired to do a prosperity study, released a report yesterday saying that Ontario must lower corporate taxes to be competitive.

I ask you one last time, Premier, can you answer without the equivocation, are we on the verge of a Dalton McGuinty recession in the province of Ontario?

**Hon. Dalton McGuinty:** Sometimes it's helpful to move beyond the rhetoric to reality, so let's take a look at this report put out by the RBC. It says: "We think that the slowdown will be short-lived, with enough offsetting forces to push the economy through these tough times. Real estate markets are in healthy shape, real wages are still rising and a big dose of interest rate stimulus should provide a boost as it filters through the economy this year."

From time to time, I get the distinct impression that my honourable colleague would relish the thought of

troublesome economic times. We just don't see it that way. We don't have that kind of a disposition; we certainly don't have that kind of an outlook. We will work through these challenging economic times together with the people of Ontario and, once again, we will emerge stronger than ever.

## EMPLOYMENT

**Mr. Jim Wilson:** My question is also for the Premier. We saw a media report that the city of Edmonton's campaign to lure Toronto university graduates to that Alberta city has been so successful that they plan to extend these job fairs to other Ontario universities. We have also heard that British Columbia has spent \$400,000 in advertising campaigns at Union Station and the University of Toronto to lure workers out west. In fact, BC's economic development minister was standing in Union Station, handing out brochures and flowers to commuters.

Premier, this province is investing millions of dollars to educate our young people, and now they're being poached from right under our noses because there's a brighter future for them outside Ontario. How can you stand by and let this happen?

**Hon. Dalton McGuinty:** Given the quality of the post-secondary-education graduate that we continue to produce in the province of Ontario, it is not surprising to me in the least that other provinces and their businesses are coming to Ontario to shop for our graduates. We have 100,000 more young people going on to a college or university; we have 15,000 more young people enrolled in apprenticeship programs; we have 10,000 more young people who are graduating on an annual basis from our high schools; and we just announced a \$1.5-billion investment in a skills strategy program. It is not surprising in the least, given the fact that we have the highest rate of post-secondary education in the western world, that not only provinces but other countries are beating a path to our door, trying to call upon our tremendous human resources—not surprising in the least.

**Mr. Jim Wilson:** Your Minister of Labour was quoted in the report as saying that there's competition for good workers. But what he won't say is that where Ontario once won that competition hands down, it's now being left behind in the dust of other provinces who understand that lower business taxes attract the investment that creates good jobs.

Young professionals earn 27% more, on average, in Edmonton than in Toronto; the average price of a home in Edmonton is 25% less than in Toronto; there's no provincial sales tax, making workers' dollars stretch further; and business taxes and family taxes are significantly lower. You don't need a university degree to do the math and figure out where the better deal is.

When is your government going to get off the wrong track and bring in smart economic measures that will encourage our young workers to stay in Ontario?

**Hon. Dalton McGuinty:** I am confident that my honourable colleague is not in any way trying to en-



courage young Ontarians to leave the province; he's not doing anything that would result in dissuading our young entrepreneurs from staying here to make their lives here, their homes here, to innovate here and to create new jobs here.

The reason I'm so confident in our province, in our economy and in our people is because we have, through our government, given expression to what I think are the aspirations of the people of Ontario. They want us to find a way, for example, to reduce taxes in a smart way, and we are doing that specifically for manufacturing and resource-based businesses. They want us to find a way to support innovation and we are doing that as well. We've got this great new policy that we've just put out in this budget, which says that if you develop a business here, for the next 10 years you pay zero by way of income taxes, as long as you develop an idea from a college or university here in the country. Those are the kinds of exciting ideas that we'll continue to—

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Thank you. Final supplementary.

**Mr. Jim Wilson:** Premier, as you know, most businesses fail in the first five years, so that's a pretty good guarantee you've given them. They won't have to pay taxes. Most of them don't anyway. So that's a pretty false promise, I'd say over there.

The failure of this government's wrong-track policies can be seen in the figures: 72,000 people last year went to Alberta and Saskatchewan alone, and we can be certain that thousands are leaving every month as we speak. To add insult to injury, BC believes they're doing your government a favour with these job fairs. Their economic development minister said that British Columbia is providing unemployed workers in Ontario with an option, rather than having them sit around looking for work and driving up Ontario's cost of social services.

Premier, is this your Liberal government's clever way of driving down unemployment numbers and social service costs—sending our people out west, no hope, no opportunity in Ontario? Go west young man, fend for yourself.

**Hon. Dalton McGuinty:** There was someone else who recently said that the last place you'd want to invest in Canada is Ontario. That was shocking when we heard that statement. Perhaps it is somewhat understandable that the individual who uttered those comments was from another level of government and did not feel it was his responsibility to represent Ontario. But to hear the member opposite suggest that somehow young people should be leaving the province of Ontario or that they can't find their fortune here I think is completely unacceptable. If he wants to work with us to continue to strengthen this economy, to improve the quality of our education, to continue to cut business taxes in a responsible way, I invite him to do so.

## EMPLOYMENT

**Mr. Howard Hampton:** To the Premier: The Premier will already know that RBC released their forecast. It's interesting, but the RBC forecast for our province is entitled "Ontario on Brink of Recession." The Premier will note that their forecast of real economic growth for Ontario is below the McGuinty government's forecast.

Last week, the McGuinty government had an opportunity to do something to take on Ontario's economic challenges. I wonder if you can tell the 200,000 people who have lost their jobs already and the many thousands more at risk of losing their jobs why the McGuinty government was missing in action.

**Hon. Dalton McGuinty:** I guess my friend is not aware of some of the basic contents of our budget. The fact of the matter is that when it comes to job creation during the course of the past four years plus, there were 450,000 net new jobs here in the province of Ontario. The concern he raises is about those folks who have unfortunately lost their jobs. He hasn't taken into account our new \$1.5 billion investment in skills for people who find themselves in challenging times.

We think that our plan to cut taxes, to invest in skills, to support innovation, to continue to partner with businesses, constitutes an intelligent, responsible plan that is designed to help our families, protect our public services and grow this economy.

1430

**Mr. Howard Hampton:** As the Premier talks about his rosy projections, this is what the RBC forecast says: "The year-long trend shows that ... the private sector is in contraction, with declines led by key sectors including forestry, agriculture, manufacturing, finance, insurance and real estate."

That doesn't sound like anyone is moving ahead. It sounds like there are very big clouds on the horizon, and the RBC forecast says that things are likely to get worse.

I want to ask again: It's very clear we've lost 200,000 good manufacturing jobs already; many thousands more are at risk. Can you tell all those workers why the McGuinty government did next to nothing in its recent budget to address the jobs crisis?

**Hon. Dalton McGuinty:** Only the leader of the New Democratic Party in the province of Ontario would dismiss \$1.5 billion as nothing. Just to elaborate a bit further, our skills-to-jobs action plan will include retraining up to 20,000 workers with new skills. It builds on the fact that we now have 100,000 more young people in our colleges and universities. We have 10,000 more graduating from our high schools, and 50,000 more young people involved in our apprenticeship training programs. It builds on the priority that we continue to attach to our people.

It is with a tremendous sense of optimism that we know we can count on being able to work with our people. We've been through many difficult and challenging economic times in our history. On each and every one



of those occasions, we have emerged stronger, and we will once again.

**Mr. Howard Hampton:** The Premier wants to talk about job training for 20,000 people when over 200,000 people have lost their jobs, when the mayor of Windsor is advertising that workers from that city should agitate for a direct flight to fly out to Alberta or Saskatchewan to find work.

Premier, we have outlined a number of proposals—practical things like a refundable manufacturing investment tax credit; like a real Buy Ontario strategy, instead of a 25% watered-down project which you put forward; like reasonable industrial hydro rates, so manufacturers can afford to stay in the province.

I ask again: Can you tell us why, in last week's budget, your government did next to nothing in what is a growing jobs crisis in Ontario?

**Hon. Dalton McGuinty:** I'm getting a bit of the two-step from the leader of the NDP now. He's telling me we need to do more to help business, and at the same time of course, I expect that later this question period he'll be asking us to spend more on social programs. We've made our choices and we think they're sensible, given our circumstances.

I know that he keeps talking about this refundable tax credit. We've done something which is better and more immediate. We have \$190 million in rebates that will go out the door as soon as the budget gets passed. We have cut the capital tax for businesses by 21%, retroactive to January 2007, who are not in the manufacturing or resource sector. We are cutting the business education tax. We're accelerating that cut for northern businesses. We're extending the capital cost allowance to 2012. We have a new 10-year income tax exemption for new companies working with universities or colleges to commercialize research. Beyond that, we're extending digital media tax benefits to 2012.

We think that's a pretty fulsome package, given our efforts to juggle all these competing responsibilities. We think that's in keeping with Ontarians' desire to protect their public services.

## EMPLOYMENT

**Mr. Howard Hampton:** Again to the Premier: One of the telling parts of the RBC report is that it focuses not just on Ontario but also on other provinces. This is what it has to say about Quebec and Quebec's budget: "Efforts are under way to keep the investment climate competitive both within Canada and on the international stage"—particularly with respect to manufacturing. Ironically, RBC said no such thing about Ontario's budget.

I want to ask the Premier: When Quebec can take positive steps to sustain manufacturing jobs in that province and the RBC in their report acknowledges that, why couldn't Ontario have done the same?

**Hon. Dalton McGuinty:** To the Minister of Finance.

**Hon. Dwight Duncan:** I would recommend that the member opposite read the entire RBC report and see

what it says. The Premier quoted it earlier into the record. I'll say this, our budget is the right response to challenging times—since the fall statement, more than \$1.1 billion in tax relief, in terms of the forestry sector; that's on top of a billion dollars over the last five years.

Every group—from the Chamber of Commerce, the CFIB, and Buzz Hargrove, president of the Canadian Auto Workers—talked about how successful our capital tax elimination was for the manufacturing sector. There is no doubt that there are challenges in the economy. There is no doubt that there's more to do. But the reason our response to the economy was so well received is because it was balanced, informed, and it will see Ontario through these challenging times as we protect those vital public services that are important to our people, but important to our economy.

**Mr. Howard Hampton:** The finance minister refers to \$1 billion for the forest sector. What he failed to acknowledge is \$1 billion is announced and re-announced; less than \$100 million has been taken up.

This is what RBC says further about Quebec: "Manufacturers will welcome further relief via a new investment tax credit of 5% for the purchase of manufacturing and processing equipment, which is then scaled higher to as much as 40% for businesses in depressed regions of the province."

I can tell the Premier that if northern Ontario had seen something like that, if Windsor had seen something like that, if Hamilton had seen something like that, you would have people out there saying, "The McGuinty government has done something significant." But the fact is, the McGuinty government hasn't done that.

I ask the Premier again, when Quebec can bring in these kinds of manufacturing incentives, why can't the McGuinty government in Ontario?

**Hon. Dwight Duncan:** We have brought in appropriate incentives that get the cash into their hands very quickly. But let me tell you what else Ontario has brought in, in January and February of this year. In January and February of this year, 59,000 net new jobs were created in Ontario. The leader of the third party conveniently neglects to mention that. There is no question that there are challenges in the economy. There are far too many families in Ontario who are not sharing in our overall prosperity, and that is precisely why we brought in our five-point economic plan beginning with the throne speech, implementation starting in the fall statement, and through the budget. That plan will help us through these challenging times. It's an appropriate response with investments through tax relief to business, training, innovation—precisely what the RBC and other analysts have called on all governments to do.

**Mr. Howard Hampton:** It's interesting that every time someone gets a job with a temp agency, the McGuinty government says, "Oh, there's a new job." People out there know that those jobs in the service sector often pay less than \$10 an hour—no benefits, no pension and no job security.



But if RBC congratulates Quebec, then they're absolutely gushing about Manitoba: "All combined, Manitoba is one of the better positioned provinces to weather a US slowdown ... and should remain one of the fastest-growing provinces in 2008." And they congratulate Manitoba on its diversified manufacturing sector. Why is Manitoba doing well? They have a refundable manufacturing investment tax credit. They've got reasonable industrial hydro rates. They are a province that is actually doing something. If Quebec can do it and Manitoba can do it and help to sustain jobs, where is the McGuinty government? Why is it missing in action?

**Hon. Dwight Duncan:** The government's response, through its budget, was the right response to the challenges in our economy today. I would remind the member opposite that, in 2007, 101,000 net new jobs were created. The average hourly wage was \$19.50. Real wages were up in the economy. Modest growth will be experienced this year, according to each analyst who has reported numbers.

There is no doubt that the challenges are real. There is no doubt that government can respond to those areas that it can respond to, and there is no doubt in the minds of people such as the Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters, and the Ontario chamber that our investments in infrastructure, training and innovation are the right responses at this time to the challenges that are in our economy today.

#### TOBACCO CONTROL

**Ms. Laurie Scott:** To the Minister of Health Promotion: Located on Argyle Street in Caledonia on government-owned property, within 1,200 metres of both a high school and an elementary school, is an illegal smoke shop. The children of Caledonia are buying tax-free cigarettes with no health warnings, without being asked for proper identification. We're not talking about an ice cream truck parked in front of a school. It's the sale of illegal, untested, hazardous products to the people who deserve our protection the most. As the Minister of Health Promotion in Ontario, why haven't you shut down this illegal smoke shack, particularly since it's running on government property?

1440

**Hon. Margaret R. Best:** I'll pass this question to Minister Bartolucci.

**Hon. Rick Bartolucci:** I look forward to answering the question. Since October 2003, Ontario has taken many steps to attack illegal contraband cigarette sales, including the Tobacco Tax Act. Convictions under the act have doubled between 2005 and 2007. Over the past two years, 14 million contraband cigarettes, 112,000 untaxed cigars and large quantities of fine cut tobacco have been seized by the Ministry of Revenue's investigators and inspectors. There is still more to do, and we will continue to be very, very proactive on this issue.

**Ms. Laurie Scott:** I want to go back to the Minister of Health Promotion because, Minister, this outrageous

situation falls directly within your ministry, which spends millions of advertising dollars preaching against the evils of smoking, particularly to young children. There are illegal cigarettes being sold on government property to children within a stone's throw of their school. What answers do you have for the parents of the schoolchildren in Caledonia who see this government just sitting back? It facilitates the availability of cigarettes to young children just down the street from their schools. Are you telling us the health and well-being of our children, and the children of Caledonia in this particular instance, don't hold the highest priority of this government?

**Hon. Rick Bartolucci:** I think this government is telling her exactly the opposite. I am very, very proud of our smoke-free Ontario legislation. Reducing the demand for tobacco is crucial. I'm very pleased to learn from my colleague Minister Best that tobacco consumption in Ontario fell by 31.8% from 2003 to 2006. That equals over 4.6 billion fewer cigarettes. So when the member asks, are we not committed to reducing people using tobacco, I say no: We're very, very committed. We only wish that more of you on the other side supported that legislation.

#### EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS

**Mr. Paul Miller:** My question is to the Premier. With the Ontario economy on the possible cusp of a recession, why won't the Premier assist laid-off workers who are being cheated out of their hard-earned wages, severances, benefits and pensions, and let the standing committee on general government discuss Bill 6, the only business before it?

**Hon. Dalton McGuinty:** To the Minister of Labour.

**Hon. Brad Duguid:** I thank the member for his question. I wonder where he was when we put the budget forward, a budget that talked very much about the things that we're doing to help workers as we go through this difficult time.

The Premier has put forward a five-point plan, and a very important part of that five-point plan is investing in our workers, investing in training and investing in retraining. That's a lot of money. It goes to workers who are in need. It's something that was well received by workers across this province, and a budget that was well received by the business community across this province. We're doing more for the workers of Ontario than any province in this country. We're very, very proud of our budget.

**Mr. Paul Miller:** I'm not sure the minister knows the content of the bill from his answer; he's deflecting it. This is about fairness, security and democracy. Given that this government used its majority on the committee to block the public from speaking on my bill, where is the democracy? With companies trimming their operations or closing down, workers are getting pink slips daily. Will the Premier make sure no one is denied the wages, severance, benefits and pension that they have



earned when a plant shuts down or lays off workers? Will he move Bill 6 to public hearings immediately?

**Hon. Brad Duguid:** I have been in touch with the federal Minister of Labour. As the member well knows, the federal government has passed a piece of legislation that we feel was a good first step but was wholly inadequate in protecting workers. We formally asked the minister to include severance and termination pay within that bill. But what the NDP are proposing here is nothing short of a payroll tax. We feel that is irresponsible in this economy, to jack up taxes on businesses, in particular in the manufacturing sector. That is what the effect of that bill would be. We don't think now is the time to go there.

### PROPERTY TAXATION

**Ms. Laurel C. Broten:** My question is for the minister responsible for seniors. Seniors built this province that we're so proud to call home. Community groups in my riding of Etobicoke–Lakeshore work hard every single day, whether it's LAMP Community Health Centre, Stonegate Community Health Centre, Etobicoke Services for Seniors, CANES or Storefront Humber. Groups come together to improve the quality of life of seniors and make sure they can live their lives in dignity and that they're supported.

My question for you is, what is our government doing and what steps are we taking to act as a partner in the improvement of seniors' quality of life as they live out many years in this great province?

**Hon. M. Aileen Carroll:** I thank my colleague from Etobicoke–Lakeshore for her question. She hears regularly, as do I and all of our colleagues, from seniors, whom we spent a lot of time canvassing during the election. It was an opportunity, as it always is, to hear what's going well for them and what's not. This government responded directly to what we heard at those doors and what we continue to hear. We heard that many of them are on fixed incomes and, even though they own their homes and don't have mortgages, still they are having difficulties with their property tax. As a result of that, we have brought in an excellent program which is going to begin in 2009 and will provide grants to eligible mid- to lower-income seniors on their property taxes, beginning at \$250 and going to \$500 by the year 2010.

**Ms. Laurel C. Broten:** As the minister said, I too have the privilege to go about my community. Whether I talk to people in Long Branch, Mimico, New Toronto, Alderwood, Islington or the Kingsway, we do hear from seniors, who purchased their home many years ago and have seen the value of that house go up, and their challenge with paying for their property taxes when they live on a fixed income. What my constituents are asking me is: How are they going to access this new funding and support by the province, and when are they going to be able to do that?

**Hon. M. Aileen Carroll:** I think what my colleague has asked is really important. "It's good to hear about the

programs, but how do we get that program?" is often a question that seniors ask us.

This program begins in 2009. Seniors will be able to access the grant with the submission of their income tax returns. After they have submitted their income tax returns, eligible seniors will receive a cheque directly to them as a result. As I said, that's one of the initiatives.

I think it's also important to note that we've enhanced the existing Ontario property and sales tax credit program. We have enhanced it by \$16 million over four years. That means, again, that seniors on fixed incomes will benefit. That begins this year, and that too is accessible through the submission of your income tax forms.

### SCHOOL CLOSURES

**Mrs. Joyce Savoline:** To the Minister of Education: On your watch, Madam Minister, and in the riding of one of your own members, you are about to subject 100 children ages five through 12 to a 50-hour workweek. The member from Nipissing is aware of the situation. The parents of the Phelps Central Public School are running out of options and running out of time. They're reaching out beyond their community for help to save their school from closure and to protect their young children who would be forced to sit on a bus for three hours or more a day, every day.

My question is: What possible justification could there be to bus the students of Phelps Central Public School and subject them to endure the unnecessary travel time, to rob them of the freedoms we cherished in our own youth, to save a buck?

1450

**Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne:** I thank the member for the question. I am aware of the situation at the Phelps Central School, and I'm also aware of the advocacy and support that the member for Nipissing has provided for all the schools in her community.

The reality is that we have put in place pupil accommodation review guidelines in order to allow school boards to make decisions in consultation with their community that are in the best interests of children. That's why we have school boards—because it's extremely important that there be a consultation process and that the community have input.

Just on another note: The Near North board, over the term of our office, has had a reduction in enrolment of 18.3% of its students and has had a funding increase of 18.9%. So we are working very hard to make sure that the students of the Near North board have all the resources that they need.

**Mrs. Joyce Savoline:** Minister, five- and six-year-olds are not going to sit still in their seats for an hour and a half each way. Three hours on a bus each day in rural, northern conditions is an accident waiting to happen. These students get up at 5:30 every morning. They're going to get home and they're not going to want to do homework 10 hours later. Will they have those same



opportunities as students across the province to participate in the after-school programs?

Unfortunately, much like the current ESL situation in our province, the ministry has failed to direct this board to utilize the funding for its intended purpose. The closure of this school would contravene your own government's education policies for parent-community engagement and subject the youth of Phelps to additional hardships.

I ask you, Minister: When will you understand the needs of our rural schools and take action to give the students of Phelps the childhood they deserve?

**Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne:** It's interesting that this is the same party that, a few minutes ago, was talking about reducing revenue and reducing taxes, and here we have a question that actually is a spend-more question. I think the disarray on the other side of the House is apparent.

The point is that this school has got a very strong school council. The member for Nipissing has been very much a part of this conversation and has visited the school in question. The other reality is that school boards have to make decisions based on the best programming for their children, for the kids in the school. We are absolutely confident that the Near North board, working with its community, is going to provide the best programming for the students in their schools.

That is the point. That is why we put the accommodation review guidelines in place, and that is why I'm confident that these students will get the best program possible.

#### LOW-SPEED VEHICLES

**Mr. Michael Prue:** My question is to the Minister of Transportation. Last November, the Minister of Transportation told Torontonians who were interested in buying zero-emission, no-noise Zenn cars that they would be able to do so very soon. On February 11, my office wrote to him asking for an actual date and when he might be able to accomplish this. We have never received the courtesy of a reply. I ask the minister today: When will these vehicles be approved for sale in Ontario?

**Hon. James J. Bradley:** Did you not get a reply? The reason I ask is that I thought I signed a reply to you. I remember reading your letter and I could—I signed a reply, so I don't know where it went along the way. I apologize to the member—

*Interjection.*

**Hon. James J. Bradley:** It must be Canada Post. No, I say to the member that I signed a number of letters to people in that regard.

As you know, we are consulting with the federal government in this regard as to the safety requirements. I'm very enthusiastic, the Premier's very enthusiastic, and I know my friend from East York is very enthusiastic about the possibility of these cars being on our roadways soon. The consultation that we're having with the federal government is on the safety aspects, because I know the member would share my concern that if there are any

safety problems with these vehicles, placing them on all roads in the province would be a major challenge until we address those. I think it's a great idea, though, and we're trying to address those.

**Mr. Michael Prue:** Back to the minister: As you know, these cars have been approved in other jurisdictions in Canada. In other provinces, they're on the road, they're actually operating, and they have almost identical safety standards to our own. Zenn cars, in my view, are the way of the future in large urban centres, and they are made here in Canada, albeit not in Ontario. They are clean. They make sense. They are wanted by many Torontonians and many people who live in Ontario. When will you say the word and make these cars available for sale? The people of this province are awfully tired of waiting.

**Hon. James J. Bradley:** I say to my friend that I wish it were that simple, because I'd love to see the cars—

**Mr. Michael Prue:** It's that simple.

**Hon. James J. Bradley:** No, it isn't that simple. I know it's that simple on the opposition benches. The member forgets that I sat in the opposition benches for years, and I remember how simple things can be from the opposition benches.

I want to tell you that we are determined to see these vehicles on our roads. We already have some pilot projects being undergone in the province at the present time. We will see more of those. I have met with the people who are responsible for promoting and constructing these, and they are providing more information to us. So I hope at the very earliest opportunity we can see the vehicles on the road. I know the Premier is a very strong proponent of them.

I know that safety is of great concern. Your transportation critic would chastise me if I were not to look after the safety aspects of this issue, as well as all other aspects of the issue.

#### AFFORDABLE HOUSING

**Mr. Jeff Leal:** My question today is to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. Last week, I had a chance to join my federal counterpart, Dean Del Mastro, and Mayor Paul Ayotte to announce 79 new affordable housing units in Peterborough that will receive more than \$5.5 million from the federal and provincial governments. This was on top of \$849,000 that Peterborough received for social housing repairs in the 2008 budget.

My constituents tell me that there's more to do when it comes to affordable housing, and I know that all three levels of government need to help to address this issue. What are we doing to help create more affordable housing in the great province of Ontario?

**Hon. Jim Watson:** Let me begin my thanking the member from Peterborough who, from his time on city council in Peterborough to his time as an MPP, has been a strong advocate for affordable housing, not only in his own community and county but the province of Ontario.



On top of the 79 units the member spoke of, Peterborough has an additional 178 units already being built that have received over \$5.8 million under the federal-provincial program that was signed by the previous federal government. In addition, something we're proud of is the rent bank program that I know Peterborough and other communities have benefited from. It has saved 13,000 people from being evicted in the province of Ontario.

We have more to do. The affordable housing program expires in March 2009. That's why I was in Ottawa yesterday with provincial and territorial ministers, encouraging the federal government to come to the table and renew these agreements with all provinces and territories for the benefit of those people looking for affordable housing.

**Mr. Jeff Leal:** I want to thank the minister for his answer. I'm proud of what this government and our colleagues in the McGuinty government are doing to invest in affordable housing in Peterborough. I know all three levels of government need to roll up their sleeves and get to work to improve affordable housing. I'm proud of the work that the federal and provincial governments, along with municipalities throughout Ontario, are doing in this area.

But I was dismayed and sad yesterday when my colleague from Parkdale-High Park said that, "...165 million federal dollars for affordable housing may be rescinded by March 2009 because of the McGuinty government's inaction on affordable housing." Minister, we need all the money we can get to get affordable housing going in Ontario. It's time we set the record straight on this issue.

**Hon. Jim Watson:** It probably doesn't come as much of a surprise, but the NDP got it wrong once again. It's not true. There is no expiry date, as the member from Parkdale indicated. We've already delivered \$127 million in funding through our DOOR program. We've already delivered 14,000 rent supplements as of January 1 this year. The program has opened up a second round, we hope, for another 14,000 applicants by the end of June.

We have an \$80-million aboriginal trust program. We're consulting with the aboriginal and First Nations communities. We're not simply going to go out and build houses without their concurrence and without their consultation. But we need all three levels of government to be rowing in the same direction. We need the federal government at the table. We were disappointed yesterday. We couldn't even get a commitment by Minister Solberg for a formal FPT meeting in the fall of this year. But we're not going to give up hope that the federal government will come to its senses and realize we need federal resources to make this program—

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Thank you. New question.

1500

## HIGHWAY CONSTRUCTION

**Mr. John Yakabuski:** My question is for the Minister of Transportation. Minister, as you know, one of the most pressing issues in my riding of Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke is the extension of Highway 417 through and beyond the town of Arnprior. There have been some recent rumblings that work on that project is going to commence. I'd ask you today if you could tell us what plans your ministry has for the extension of 417 this year.

**Hon. James J. Bradley:** I thank the member for the question. It's an excellent question. Our government, as you know, is investing record amounts of money in keeping our highways in good repair, reducing congestion, improving safety and promoting the economy. In 2008-09, we're spending \$927 million for that purpose.

I know the member has read the budget and this is where he and I picked this up. On page 38 it mentions exactly what he said: "Another new project includes capacity improvements to Highway 17 near Arnprior in eastern Ontario to address growing traffic and enhance safety." So I know what he's looking for would be the detail in that particular case.

The ministry staff held a public information centre for the area last week and municipal councils were informed of this funding. So that funding is in place; he'll be happy to know that. Funding for the construction of phase one from Rural Route 29 to Division Street is in place and construction will start in 2009 and complete in 2011.

**Mr. John Yakabuski:** That's a small part of the phase. Municipal leaders continually have told us that we need ongoing and continuous progress on this file. That's a little bit of work and we do we appreciate it. The previous government brought that highway to Arnprior. What we need now is continuous progress beyond. You will know that the federal government has given strong indication that they are prepared to share in the cost of this project, should the province make it one of their priorities.

Will you commit to putting in your five-year plan ongoing progress on 417 through Arnprior to Renfrew and beyond?

**Hon. James J. Bradley:** Again, a very understandable question. It's interesting, though, I must say as a preamble, that the federal government is going to fund all of these projects individually—they talk about them when members bring them forward—but that would mean a lot more federal money coming in. We would welcome that and I'd get my friend to help me out in that regard.

A detailed design for phase two from just west of Division Street to Scheel Drive is under way. The public has been participating in the design through the public advisory committee. Two public information centres have already been held and funding approval for construction of phase two will be considered in future budgets. But we're doing the work ahead of time so we can get the projects moving as quickly as possible. The



timing of construction for phase two will be determined upon receiving funding for approval for construction.

I know the member and I will both be advocating for as much funding as we can with our good colleagues in government. I'm glad to have his support for this particular initiative.

### ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

**Mr. Howard Hampton:** Premier, today the Nishnawbe Aski Nation chiefs-in-assembly reached a unanimous decision to suspend bilateral discussions with the government of Ontario. I want to quote NAN Grand Chief Stan Beardy: "We cannot in good conscience continue to engage in bilateral discussions with the government of Ontario while one of our leaders and his council are in jail for Ontario's failure to fulfill its duty," and he's referring to the duty to consult. But just yesterday in question period, the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs said "the province had in fact discharged its duty to consult."

Premier, in view of the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs' categorical statement, can you tell the NAN chiefs and assembly where and how they are mistaken?

**Hon. Dalton McGuinty:** I think we are entitled—there's obviously a difference here. I'm disappointed to learn that discussions have broken off and I hope that we can resume those at the earliest possible opportunity. But there is a difference of opinion here in terms of whether Ontario met its duties to consult. I think we should look to Mr. Justice Smith's ruling, where he specifically found that Ontario had in fact met its duty to consult. I think that we can rely on the judge who heard submissions and made some important findings.

Notwithstanding that, we look forward to resuming discussions with the community at the earliest possible time.

**Mr. Howard Hampton:** I don't know how much more clear the NAN chiefs and assembly could be. They said they're not breaking off discussions with the federal government; they are breaking off bilateral discussions with the Ontario government: "A unanimous decision of support for Kitchenuhumaykoosib Inninuwug ... leadership by NAN chiefs-in-assembly and the decision by NAN to suspend bilateral discussions with the government of Ontario regarding lands and resources until the immediate and unconditional release of KI chief and council." That is their position.

Their position is that the KI chief and council are in jail because Ontario did not consult. Ontario may have consulted after the fact, but that does not constitute consultation, according to Supreme Court of Canada.

I ask the Premier: What is the government going to do now that you've created a situation where there are no longer discussions between the NAN chiefs and the Ontario government?

**Hon. Dalton McGuinty:** We stand at the ready, obviously, to enter into discussion at the earliest possible opportunity. If the NAN chiefs have decided that they're

not prepared to do that at this time, we regret that, but we must of course accept that.

I think we have an important difference of perspective on this. Again, according to Mr. Justice Smith's ruling, Ontario in fact met its duty to consult—

**Mr. Howard Hampton:** After the fact.

**Hon. Dalton McGuinty:** The leader of the NDP says that it was after the fact, but that's not how Justice Smith saw it. And I think that if I have to choose from the submission of my learned friend opposite or the finding of Mr. Justice Smith, I tend to prefer the finding of Mr. Justice Smith.

We set ourselves out on an important journey. It will be fraught with some challenges along the way. There are some 130 First Nations in Ontario. From time to time, we will have differences, but we're bringing goodwill, we're bringing resources, and we're bringing a commitment that has been lacking for a long, long time. We want to move forward together with our First Nations communities.

### YOUTH ENTREPRENEURS

**Ms. Leeanna Pendergast:** My question is for the Minister of Small Business and Entrepreneurship. As a teacher and administrator for over 20 years, it's been my vocation to advocate for students—students in the mainstream, students at risk and students in rural and remote communities. Both in my riding of Kitchener–Conestoga and the greater Waterloo region, we have outstanding secondary schools and world-class post-secondary institutions.

The Waterloo Region District School Board has over 56,000 students; the Waterloo Catholic District School Board, over 23,000 students; the University of Waterloo and Wilfred Laurier University have well over 35,000 students; and Conestoga College's part-time enrolment is over 38,000 students. That's a lot of students.

Students are now looking for summer employment. One of the mandates of the ministry, as I understand, is to promote youth entrepreneurship. Could the minister please tell us what his ministry is doing to promote entrepreneurship with our youth?

**Hon. Harinder S. Takhar:** First of all, I would like to thank the member from Kitchener–Conestoga for asking this question. I also want to take this opportunity to wish her all the best in her new job.

The Summer Company program is one of our very successful programs, which we have already launched. Let me give you some details about it. This program is open to our young entrepreneurs between the ages of 16 and 29. If they submit a viable business plan to our enterprise centre, they are eligible to get some financial help from the government—up to \$1,500 when they submit the business plan. They can then run their own business during the summer period. During this period, we provide them with mentorships and training, and they also get another \$1,500 when they finish with the program. So I really want to make sure that entrepreneurship becomes



a viable option for our students, not just looking for employment.

1510

**Ms. Leeanna Pendergast:** As our youth are the entrepreneurs of the future—and we all know that when you affect the future, you never know where your influence ends—this is great news.

However, in order for our youth to succeed, we need to ensure they are equipped with the proper tools. In my riding of Kitchener-Conestoga, we see support to non-profit organizations that provide youth with entrepreneurial opportunities. In our schools, we see the Ontario secondary school business plan competition. This is great action by the McGuinty government and it has the potential to affect many students—in my riding alone, well over 60,000 students.

Specifically, can the minister outline the programs and initiatives through his ministry that invest in our youth in order to gain the necessary skills to equip them with the tools they need to succeed?

**Hon. Harinder S. Takhar:** I would like to thank the member again for asking the question. It's very important for us to make sure that we create a culture of entrepreneurship among our youth, because they really are our future in the long haul. So let me just talk briefly about three programs. We have a global ed program, which we started last year. It was a pilot program under which we provide experience to our youth in the international markets. There was \$1.7 million included in this budget for us to strengthen that program further.

The second program is that we have also given some money to create a youth business foundation under which youth can actually get some loans to start their own businesses. You have talked about our business plan competition, which is a widely successful program in our schools. But in addition to that, the Summer Company program actually builds on that program.

All those programs combined together actually provide quite a good basis to young entrepreneurs to start their own businesses.

#### ONTARIO NORTHLAND TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

**Mr. John O'Toole:** My question is to the Premier. You should know that the Ontario Northland Transportation Commission has not published an annual report for the entire term of your government, since 2003. In fact, the last statement was in 2003 and more recently—it is described as "the site is under construction." Yet, Premier, it is your government that ran on those very themes of openness and the principle of accountability.

Premier, in the interest of this accountability, what will your government do to ensure that the Ontario Northland Transportation System delivers at least one annual report in your term?

**Hon. Dalton McGuinty:** To the Minister of Transportation.

**Hon. James J. Bradley:** Thank you very much. I will share this with the Minister for Northern Development and Mines, who is responsible.

I tend to agree with the member that whenever we can it's valuable to have that kind of information available, not only to members of the Legislature but the general public. I know that when they have a lot of activities to undertake, sometimes the one that is not put on the front burner is the one of developing an annual report, and I think that is valuable information. So when I'm in my discussions with the minister, I will let him know, first of all, that you have asked the question in this House about this important matter and that it would be valuable to gather this information together as soon as possible. I know the member is, as all members of the House would be, concerned that reports be provided in a timely fashion. I'll do my very best to see that happens.

**Mr. John O'Toole:** Again, to the Premier, and the minister as well can respond if he wishes. It's obvious that that is a real surprise here, just by the Premier not having any notes on it at all and the Minister of Transportation going to refer it to a minister who's not here.

This is a serious, serious issue. In fact, it begs a larger question. Something you should know is that the sunshine list published yesterday has 33 employees from this very commission on the list making \$100,000 or more. If this isn't about accountability—

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** I would ask that the member stick to his initial question, which dealt with an annual report from Ontario Northland.

**Mr. John O'Toole:** Well, Ontario Northland has a report out there. The only one that's available, Mr. Speaker, is accounting that there are 33 employees on the \$100,000 list, and yet that commission is funded by the province of Ontario. Premier, what are you going to do to have some openness and accountability in your government when you've got spending going through the roof and services being delayed?

**Hon. James J. Bradley:** I wasn't aware that the question was designed to embarrass members of the public service, as the ongoing attack of my friends in the opposite benches who continually—and I know this embarrasses the former Minister of Health, a good friend of mine from the Waterloo area, to hear that the party is swinging to the right one more time and is attacking the public service of this province by trying to embarrass them.

I would note that all members of the Legislature happen to be on the list to which he makes a reference. So I guess firing those stones around from those of us who are in glass houses can be difficult. But I want to tell the member this: The financial statements that are audited by the Auditor General are indeed on their website. I invite the member to go the Ontario Northland Transportation Commission website to look carefully at the audited statements at that time. They're available to the Auditor General, and they're available to the member.



## PROVINCIAL PURCHASING POLICY

**Mr. Michael Prue:** My question is for the Premier. The McGuinty government voted down a New Democrat private member's bill calling for 50% Canadian content in all transit purchases. In response to the NDP bill, the Premier said, "Welcome to Mr. Mauro's club. Mr. Mauro has been working on this issue for a long, long time now." Now that Mr. Mauro's bill has disappeared, leaving one to speculate on what clout, if any, Mr. Mauro had with your government, given the serious consequences for the Thunder Bay workers posed by the McGuinty government's recently announced 25% Canadian content policy and the absence of Mr. Mauro's bill, will the Premier take the opportunity to reconsider his stance and support the NDP's call for 50% Canadian content in all transit vehicles purchased in Ontario?

**Hon. Dalton McGuinty:** I want to take the opportunity to first of all thank Mr. Mauro for his influence, for lending shape to our policy. I want to thank him for taking his responsibilities seriously, and standing up for the people of his riding, and particularly the people working at the Bombardier plant in that riding.

I also want to reiterate something I've said in the past, that the workers there were very concerned that the NDP had taken a position against expanding a subway in Ontario. I'm proud to say that our Move Ontario 2020 plan is an extensive investment in public transit, and fully 82% of the money is to go to public transit; not 25% or 50%, but 82% of the monies devoted to public transit will go into the Ontario economy to create good Ontario jobs.

## PETITIONS

### ANTI-SMOKING LEGISLATION

**Ms. Laurie Scott:** This petition is entitled "Children and Smoke-Free Cars—Support Bill 11," and is brought to me by the Haliburton, Kawartha, Pine Ridge District Health Unit and students from I.E. Weldon Secondary School, Shona Hebert, Chantal Rogers, and Kim Web.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas children exposed to second-hand smoke are at a higher risk for respiratory illnesses including asthma, bronchitis and pneumonia, as well as sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS) and increased incidences of cancer and heart disease in adulthood; and

"Whereas the Ontario Medical Association supports a ban on smoking in vehicles when children are present, as they have concluded that levels of second-hand smoke can be 23 times more concentrated in a vehicle than in a house because circulation is restricted within a small space; and

"Whereas the Ipsos Reid poll conducted on behalf of the Ontario Tobacco-Free Network indicates that eight in 10 (80%) of Ontarians support 'legislation that would ban smoking in cars and other private vehicles where a child or adolescent under 16 years of age is present'; and

"Whereas Nova Scotia, California, Puerto Rico, and South Australia recently joined several jurisdictions of the United States of America in banning smoking in vehicles carrying children;

"We, the undersigned, respectfully petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to approve Bill 11 and amend the Smoke-Free Ontario Act to ban smoking in vehicles carrying children 16 years of age and under."

I thank all those who signed the petitions.

1520

## ABORIGINAL RIGHTS

**Mr. Howard Hampton:** I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas Kitchenuhmaykoosib Inninuwug (KI) chief Donny Morris, deputy chief Jack McKay, councillors Cecilia Begg, Samuel McKay, Darryl Sainnawap, and band member Bruce Sakakeep are imprisoned for merely protecting their land;

"Whereas the McGuinty Liberal government failed to consult KI before giving Platinex a mining permit on KI's traditional land that is currently under a land claim;

"Whereas the jailing of aboriginal leaders who disagree with the government is something you might see in a Third World dictatorship and not in Canada;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To immediately release the KI Six, remove the mining permit from KI lands and engage in proper consultation and accommodation with KI First Nation."

This petition has been signed by several residents of northwestern Ontario, and I have affixed my signature as well.

## EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

**Mr. Bob Delaney:** I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. I want to thank Sonny Sansone, a tireless advocate for the people of Scarborough, for having collected these signatures. It reads as follows:

"Whereas the federal government's employment insurance surplus now stands at \$54 billion; and

"Whereas over 60% of Ontario's unemployed are not eligible for employment insurance because of Ottawa's unfair eligibility rules; and

"Whereas an Ontario worker has to work more weeks to qualify and receives fewer weeks of benefits than other Canadian unemployed workers; and

"Whereas the average Ontario unemployed worker gets \$4,000 less in EI benefits than unemployed workers in other provinces and thus not qualifying for many re-training programs;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to press the federal government to reform the employment insurance program and to end the discrimination and unfairness towards Ontario's unemployed workers."

It's a good petition; I'm pleased to sign and support it and to ask page Laura to take it and thank her for her time being a page here.

#### LORD'S PRAYER

**Mr. Ted Chudleigh:** I have a petition.

"Whereas the current Liberal government is proposing to eliminate the Lord's Prayer from its place at the beginning of daily proceedings in the Legislature; and

"Whereas the recitation of the Lord's Prayer has opened the Legislature every day since the 19th century; and

"Whereas the Lord's Prayer's message of forgiveness and the avoidance of evil is universal to the human condition: It is a valuable guide and lesson for a chamber that is too often an arena of conflict; and

"Whereas recognizing the diversity of the people of Ontario should be an inclusive process, not one which excludes traditions such as the Lord's Prayer;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, ask the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to preserve the daily recitation of the Lord's Prayer by the Speaker in the Legislature."

I'm pleased to affix my signature to this petition, and I'm going to give it to Chantal.

#### HOSPITAL FUNDING

**Mr. Howard Hampton:** "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the McGuinty government through LHINs is forcing the Lake of the Woods District Hospital to cut services due to inadequate funding; and

"Whereas the Lake of the Woods District Hospital has been forced to look at closing its intensive care unit; and

"Whereas these cuts will increase risk of death among critical care patients and will increase waiting times in the emergency room; and

"Whereas eliminating intensive care in Kenora will not save the Ontario taxpayer any money as any savings will be eaten up by paying for critical care patient transfers to other centres;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"The Minister of Health stop the process of health care cuts in local community hospitals like the Lake of the Woods District Hospital in Kenora and realize that his local health integration networks model is another one-size-fits-all model that doesn't work in rural Ontario."

This petition has been signed by hundreds of people from the Kenora area, and I have affixed my signature as well.

#### HOSPITAL FUNDING

**Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti:** I am pleased to join the residents of Mississauga, especially west Mississauga—this petition is regarding the ambulatory surgery centre there.

"Petition to the Ontario Legislative Assembly:

"Western Mississauga ambulatory surgery centre:

"Whereas wait times for access to surgical procedures in the western GTA area served by the Mississauga Halton LHIN are growing despite the vigorous capital project activity at the hospitals within the Mississauga Halton LHIN boundaries; and

"Whereas 'day surgery' procedures could be performed in an off-site facility, thus greatly increasing the ability of surgeons to perform more procedures, alleviating wait times for patients, and freeing up operating theatre space in hospitals for more complex procedures that may require post-operative intensive care unit support and a longer length of stay in hospital;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care allocate funds in its 2008-09 capital budget to begin planning and construction of an ambulatory surgery centre located in western Mississauga to serve the Mississauga-Halton area and enable greater access to 'day surgery' procedures that comprise about four fifths of all surgical procedures performed."

I agree with this petition. I affix my signature to it and give it to page Adam, who's here with me today.

#### LORD'S PRAYER

**Mr. John O'Toole:** I'm pleased to present a petition—a number of petitions, actually—from my riding of Durham. I thank the constituents for bringing this to my attention. It reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the current Liberal government is proposing to eliminate the Lord's Prayer from its place at the beginning of daily proceedings in the Legislature; and

"Whereas the recitation of the Lord's Prayer has opened the Legislature every day since the 19th century; and

"Whereas the Lord's Prayer's message of forgiveness and the avoidance of evil is universal to the human condition: It is a valuable guide and lesson for a chamber that is too often an arena of conflict; and

"Whereas recognizing the diversity of the people of Ontario should be an inclusive process, not one which excludes traditions such as the Lord's Prayer;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, ask the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to preserve the daily recitation of the Lord's Prayer by the Speaker in the Legislature."

I'm pleased to present this, sign it in support and present it to Tola, one of the pages on her last day here at the Ontario Legislature.

#### HOSPITAL FUNDING

**Mrs. Amrit Mangat:** I have a petition to the Ontario Legislative Assembly. It reads as follows:

"Western Mississauga ambulatory surgery centre:



"Whereas wait times for access to surgical procedures in the western GTA area served by the Mississauga Halton LHIN are growing despite the vigorous capital project activity at the hospitals within the Mississauga Halton LHIN boundaries; and

"Whereas 'day surgery' procedures could be performed in an off-site facility, thus greatly increasing the ability of surgeons to perform more procedures, alleviating wait times for patients, and freeing up operating theatre space in hospitals for more complex procedures that may require post-operative intensive care unit support and a longer length of stay in hospital;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care allocate funds in its 2008-09 capital budget to begin planning and construction of an ambulatory surgery centre located in western Mississauga to serve the Mississauga-Halton area and enable greater access to 'day surgery' procedures that comprise about four fifths of all surgical procedures performed."

I support this petition. I affix my signature to it and I'm sending it by page Ramandeep.

#### LONG-TERM CARE

**Mr. John O'Toole:** I'm pleased to present a petition from the Ontario Long-Term Care Association and it's under the theme of "Long-term care needs more than a band-aid." Its theme reads

"Please tell government to provide the \$513 million required in this budget for the necessary additional staff and supplies, so that:

"Residents aren't rushed to meals or left waiting for help to go to the bathroom;

"Homes can provide more weekend and evening programs, improve meal services, increase the average number of daily incontinence changes and enhance clinical assessments;

"Homes can maintain housekeeping, laundry and related services.

"Long-term care needs more than a band-aid. Our homes need the funding to make a real difference for residents now, a difference that will also reduce the strain on hospital emergency rooms."

I'm pleased to support this and present it to Ela, one of the pages who is leaving us today.

#### EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

**Mr. Lou Rinaldi:** I have a petition:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the federal government's employment insurance surplus now stands at \$54 billion; and

"Whereas over 75% of Ontario's unemployed are not eligible for employment insurance because of Ottawa's unfair eligibility rules; and

"Whereas an Ontario worker has to work more weeks to qualify and receives fewer weeks of benefits than other Canadian unemployed workers; and

"Whereas the average Ontario unemployed worker gets \$4,000 less in EI benefits than unemployed workers in other provinces and thus not qualifying for many retraining programs;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to press the federal government to reform the employment insurance program and to end the discrimination and unfairness towards Ontario's unemployed workers."

I affix my signature, and I will allow Daniel to deliver it to the desk.

1530

#### LORD'S PRAYER

**Mr. John O'Toole:** This time I have a petition that's more formally prepared. I apologize if the previous petition wasn't exactly worded according to the orders of the table here. This petition comes to me from the Carriage Country Baptist Church, as well as the Port Perry/Prince Albert Pastoral Charge in my riding of Durham. It reads as follows:

"Whereas the current Liberal government is proposing to eliminate the Lord's Prayer from its place at the beginning of the daily proceedings in the Ontario Legislature; and

"Whereas the recitation of the Lord's Prayer has opened the Legislature every day since the 19th century; and

"Whereas the Lord's Prayer's message of forgiveness and the avoidance of evil is universal to the human condition: It is a valuable guide and lesson for a chamber that is too often an arena of conflict; and

"Whereas recognizing the diversity of the people of Ontario should be an inclusive process, not one which excludes traditions such as the Lord's Prayer;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, ask the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to preserve the daily recitation of the Lord's Prayer by the Speaker in the Legislature," as has been done for many years.

I'm pleased to sign in support of this and my constituents and present it to Laura on her last day here at the Ontario Legislature.

#### ORDERS OF THE DAY

##### ORDER OF BUSINESS

**Hon. David Caplan:** On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I seek unanimous consent to put forward a motion respecting this afternoon's debate on Bill 12.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson):** The honourable minister seeks unanimous consent concerning distribution of time. Agreed? Agreed.

**Hon. David Caplan:** I move that this afternoon's debate on Bill 12 be divided equally amongst the recognized parties.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson):** Is it agreed? Agreed.

*Agreed to.*

## BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

**Hon. David Caplan:** On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I have another point of order related to standing order 55. It's actually pretty quick. Of course, one of my highlights is to inform the House of the business for the House for next week. It's rather simple: Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday will be to be determined.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson):** That was extremely informative, Minister.

### ACCESS TO ADOPTION RECORDS ACT (VITAL STATISTICS STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT), 2008

#### LOI DE 2008 SUR L'ACCÈS AUX DOSSIERS D'ADOPTION (MODIFICATION DE LOIS EN CE QUI CONCERNE

#### LES STATISTIQUES DE L'ÉTAT CIVIL)

Mrs. Meilleur moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 12, An Act to amend the Vital Statistics Act in relation to adoption information and to make consequential amendments to the Child and Family Services Act/ Projet de loi 12, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les statistiques de l'état civil en ce qui a trait aux renseignements sur les adoptions et apportant des modifications corrélatives à la Loi sur les services à l'enfance et à la famille.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson):** Debate?

**Hon. Madeleine Meilleur:** I'd like to mention that I will share my time with my parliamentary assistant.

I am honoured to rise in this Legislature today to speak in support of Bill 12, the Access to Adoption Records Act, 2008. I am proud to be part of a government that understands that people need to be free to determine their own destinies, and that also involves knowing about one's past.

I have a personal connection to this legislation, which is why I am so proud to be standing in my place today. Before entering into politics, I worked in a delivery room as a registered nurse for 14 years at the Montfort Hospital. During that time, I saw too many young mothers give their newborn babies away simply because they believed that they had no other choice. I know that no mother would be able to give her child away without holding on to a dream, a wish, that they would one day be reunited. No mother could go through life without ever thinking about that child again and wondering where they are and if they are loved.

This legislation provides mothers and fathers with access to that dream. It gives them the peace of mind that comes with knowing that their child will not have to go through life not knowing where they came from, and the parents won't have to go through life not knowing their child. We have two guests in the gallery today who understand what it means to be reunited with their families. Please join me in welcoming Wendy Rowney and Michael Grant from the Coalition for Open Adoption Records.

If Bill 12 is passed, it will usher in a new era of progress for Ontario's adoption information disclosure system.

La législation, si adoptée, fera de l'Ontario une province ouverte et progressive quant à la divulgation des renseignements sur les adoptions.

The proposed legislation will help enshrine openness in future adoption records. If passed, this legislation will allow adoptees to learn their original name at birth, the names of their birth parents, and where they were born, and birth parents to learn about the child they placed for adoption, including their adopted name, and where the adoption took place.

Cette loi comportera également un veto pour la divulgation de renseignements identificatoires pour les personnes concernées par des adoptions passées. Les personnes dont l'ordonnance d'adoption a été rendue en Ontario avant le 1<sup>er</sup> septembre 2008 auront l'option d'enregistrer dans leurs dossiers un veto sur la divulgation d'informations identificatoires. Quiconque choisit d'enregistrer un veto pourra fournir volontairement des renseignements sur ses antécédents personnels et médicaux afin que les personnes adoptées puissent obtenir ces informations personnelles.

After all, everybody should be able to learn about their own personal history. I'd like to quote a former colleague of ours, Ms. Marilyn Churley, who as a young mother had to give up her son for adoption. "I gave the baby up, but not because I wanted to. But there really was no other choice. As I stared at my son through the nursery window at the hospital, my last words to him were, 'I will find you some day.' Twenty-eight years later, after much searching, I did. I wanted to know that he was happy and had found a good family." She says she was haunted for the rest of her days because she never got to hold him, and that she thought about him all the time. She goes on to say that people need to know basic personal information about themselves, and they feel better just knowing the facts—just knowing the facts.

These are the realities that our proposed legislation recognizes.

Connaître la vérité, c'est ce qui est au cœur de cette législation.

It recognizes the struggle that many adopted adults and birth parents have waged for many years: a struggle to learn about their identity and their children through personal information that the rest of us simply take for granted.



This proposed legislation would put Ontario at the forefront of modern adoption information disclosure law. It respects the recent decision of the Superior Court of Justice. It respects the view of Ontario's Information and Privacy Commissioner. At the same time, it would safeguard the privacy of those involved in past adoptions.

1540

Pourquoi une nouvelle législation? L'Ontario a dépassé le stade où les adoptions se faisaient en secret et où l'on se gardait bien d'en informer l'enfant. Il fût un temps où nous avions des orphelinats, des asiles pour les personnes souffrant de démence et des résidences pour les filles-mères. C'était aussi l'époque où les filles-mères se faisaient dire qu'elles devaient donner leur enfant en adoption pour obéir aux valeurs d'une société qui dictait à ses membres leur conduite.

Today, many adoptions are open. Birth relatives and adoptive families know one another's identities, and birth parents often stay in touch with the children they gave up for adoption.

Depuis plusieurs années, les personnes adultes adoptées et les parents de sang demandent à avoir un plus grand accès aux ordonnances d'adoption.

Adoptees have told us that knowing about their past would give them purpose and closure to the struggle of coping with not knowing. They told us that they shouldn't be treated differently just because they were involved in an adoption.

Birth parents told us that too often they had to give up their children due to family pressure. Many simply wanted to know if their birth children are alive and well. Child welfare experts have told us for years that adoptees want to know about their origins and birth parents want to know that their children are happy and healthy in their new families.

Nous croyons que chaque individu devrait connaître son histoire personnelle, qu'il soit ou non adopté. Nous croyons que les personnes adoptées devraient avoir les mêmes droits que les personnes non adoptées, c'est-à-dire, le droit de connaître leur identité et leur histoire personnelle.

Our legislation allows for a great deal of flexibility and personal choice in terms of privacy protection. People can choose for themselves how much information they want to reveal. They can place a disclosure veto on their file so their identifying information will not be released. They can choose to place no-contact notices or contact preferences on their files.

If an adoptee, birth parent or birth relative has concerns about diagnosing or treating a severe medical illness, they can apply for a severe medical search to locate birth relatives. This was passed under previous legislation and remains in place today.

Pourquoi maintenant? Comme je disais précédemment, l'Ontario n'est plus la province qu'elle était il y a 50 ans. Les gens et les mentalités ont évolués, et nous croyons que la législation concernant l'adoption doit aussi se moderniser.

We believe that individuals who are trying to learn about their identity and personal history should be able to do so without unnecessary hardship and delay. I believe it is in everyone's best interest to move quickly on this legislation.

Alors, je demande aux membres de la Législature de s'unir à nos efforts et de soutenir ce projet de loi.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson):** Further debate? There might be some confusion, because I see the member from London-Fanshawe getting up. In the debate this afternoon, each party will get equal time, and we'll go in strict rotation so you won't lose any time.

**Mr. Peter Kormos:** On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I did recall the minister indicating that she would be sharing her lead time with the member, and we are prepared to accept that by way of—

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson):** Yes, and some days we have to have that agreement. It was redundant today. We go in strict rotation for this particular debate. If members want leave the floor to the member for London-Fanshawe, that's your decision, but I believe that if we go in rotation the member for York-Simcoe has the floor.

**Mrs. Julia Munro:** Normally, when I begin making remarks, I would comment on what a pleasure it is to be able to join in the debate on this particular piece of legislation. Unfortunately, I don't feel that way about the opportunity to speak today to this legislation.

I want to just set a context for our debate today. Obviously for generations people, through various cultures and so forth, have had adoption processes. People would find themselves in a position where that became the only alternative for babies and children, and the laws then always reflected the nature of the society in which those activities were being undertaken.

Clearly, through the generations, there's always been this fundamental understanding that giving babies and children comfort, stability and support that only a family can provide was an essential ingredient. Whereas, if you look back a couple of centuries ago, they were usually informal; it could be formal relations, but there were certainly adoptions within families.

By mid-last-century there was a great deal of stigma attached to women whose babies were born out of wedlock. I can remember that girls simply disappeared for a few months to visit an aunt or something like that. It's really quite shocking, by our views, to think of the way young girls found themselves in a process over which, in many cases, they had absolutely no say, no guidance, no experience, and so they found themselves then whisked away and then, when they did have their babies, the babies were whisked away.

So it's in that kind of context that I think a lot of what we look at today in this legislation is set, but why I said at the beginning that I'm not pleased about being here at this particular point is the fact that when the government introduced its first version of this bill, it broke two fundamental principles of law—not that they are unconstitutional in themselves, but they're quite simply



principles of law that legislators are frankly advised to follow. One principle is the issue of retroactivity and the other one is reverse onus.

What we saw in the first incarnation of this legislation was, of course, the fact that these individuals who had signed over babies, usually—sometimes children—did so on the principle that this was it. They had understood and signed an agreement in which there would never be any kind of opening of materials or documentation. Instead, people found themselves in the position of something that had happened to them, in some cases, 30, 40, 50 years ago; they were then placed in a position that not only destroyed the principle of retroactivity, of suddenly finding that an agreement they made was not part of the current idea of the former bill, but also that bill required them to demonstrate another break with normal procedure, and that is the question of reverse onus. So not only were they finding themselves in the position of having this contractual agreement that they had with the state being broken, but they had to in fact be prepared to go forward and explain why this would bring danger or discomfort of some kind to them.

1550

It was on those principles that we as a caucus told you that this wasn't the right way to go, that these people who had this arrangement should be treated in a more respectful way; so did the privacy commissioner, Dr. Cavoukian. I think one of the things that bothered us as legislators, and certainly Dr. Cavoukian as the privacy commissioner, was the fact that people were e-mailing and sending us telephone messages from across the province, talking about how personally threatened they felt with this principle of retroactivity suddenly being placed upon them.

I know in my case that we would have phone calls that would be made outside my office hours simply to avoid talking to anybody, to be able to just deliver a message: "Please tell my member that this is something that would be devastating to me." Then, that would come in the form of e-mails.

I remember that I met a woman in the parking lot of my office who did not want to reveal her name or where she lived, but she wanted to talk to me about how devastating this was to her. Frankly, her fear—I think that part of the problem was the fact that this was a part of the lives of so many of these affected people; that they had managed, like the proverbial oyster with the pearl, to weave a piece around it, the time in their lives that they believed would be a secret forever.

Suddenly to find themselves powerless, to be able to say, "This is going to impact on me. No one knows this about me. How am I going to be able to deal with this in the context of my family, friends and so forth?"—in my case, I hope I was able to make my constituent appreciate that I was very sympathetic to her circumstances.

I also want to say that I also understood the need to know, and I think that our role in debate was always premised on the fact that we recognized that there should be a legal opportunity for the right to know. But putting

all of these women in the situation, and I shouldn't just say women, because there were also fathers, as well as adoptees, who felt—I want to say, beyond threatened, because they weren't sure of how there could ever be some protection for them, given the legislative framework that they were looking at.

I want to take some time, because I think that for all of the members of the committee, regardless of which side of the committee you sat on—when Dr. Cavoukian came she brought with her a collection of e-mails and letters that she had received. It's important to remind everyone that this is the context for the bill that we are looking at today. So I'm going to read a couple of the letters that she received that were demonstrating what we on this side felt was so important.

I begin: "I am horrified and shocked at the adoption disclosure legislation introduced ... by the government. I am one of the young girls who thought they were safe.... When I signed the adoption papers some 35 years ago, I was promised in a courtroom that my identity would be protected and that no identifying information about me would ever be released. I feel betrayed by the system."

Another wrote, "I am most distraught that my life is going to be turned upside down, my reputation sullied, my career ruined and that my family will be in shambles if my privacy is violated by opening up adoption files.... Birth parents deserve the protection they were promised. Adoptions were confidential and there was never any reason to believe that this trust would be desecrated."

Another mother who had given up her child in the 1950s wrote, "In my case ... we birth mothers were promised complete confidentiality upon adoption.... Please consider my situation now. I am 70 years old, 40 years married.... None of my family members are aware of what happened to me when I was young. Is it fair that after 50 years I am faced with a disclosure that would shock and affect my whole family? ... I feel that my rights of privacy, which were promised by the government, are being broken with no consideration given to birth mothers or their feelings."

Another letter: "I was assured my file and identity would be sealed always. It is wrong to expect we, of 80 years of age and living in a much different era, to conform to 21st-century ideas and rules.... I do not want to relive 60 years ago. I would rather be dead. They have broken bonds of trust...."

"This legislation," another writer says, "appears to be against elderly birth mothers. We are the ones that [were] told our records would be sealed and not to interfere with the adoption...."

I think that's another point that is overlooked as well—the manner in which girls at that particular time were treated and the way in which they did not have any rights at all. The only one they had in this regard was that right to privacy.

The writer goes on: "I am over 80 years old. If they [the government] wait a few years, many of us will be dead and not a bother to the government."



Another letter says, "There should be no retroactive adoption disclosure. It should start now so everyone is aware of this. It is unfair. I was promised sealed records always. It would be taking away our privacy rights. No government should stoop so low."

I think it's important to put these back on the record, and there are letters in Hansard from fathers as well as adoptees who shared the concerns that I have suggested.

I guess the problem is that despite all of this effort that was made by members of the House and the efforts made by people who would have been adversely impacted by this legislation, all of that was in vain until the Superior Court of Ontario came into the process and then made it very clear that the judge's comments—and I'm quoting here from Mr. Sterling, also in Hansard: "It's important to read the judgment of Judge Belobaba, who made it so clear that the government of Ontario probably has the least regard for privacy rights of all governments in not only North America but the world...."

"Perhaps the greatest lesson from this particular piece of legislation is how important our Charter of Rights is. If it had not been for our Charter of Rights in Canada, we would have had a travesty in the breach of our privacy rights here ... in Ontario."

1600

I think it's very important for people to understand that the issue around developing rights for people is really, as I mentioned before, that the right to know has to be balanced with the right to privacy. The changes that this bill represents are a direct reflection then, on the efforts that were made by so many people in the community as well as those able to speak, like Dr. Cavoukian, and the judge in the Ontario Supreme Court. So I think the important thing here is to recognize that.

I guess what I could say about this bill is that it's certainly better now. It seems a shame that we have had to go through this process twice when once would have been fine, had the government listened to that kind of expert advice that it received. I think the bill, as it stands now, is certainly one that is supported by people and deserves that support. The question is, why did it take two bills when one would have done?

**Mr. Peter Kormos:** I appreciate the accommodation of me by my colleague the member for Beaches–East York, who is our party's critic in this issue and who will be addressing this legislation more fully in but a few minutes' time. I asked him for the opportunity to speak to this matter, albeit briefly.

I remember the history of this legislation very, very well, and I thank the numerous people from what they call the adoption community, who advocated for legislative reform and who presented very compelling narratives about the loss of identity that flows from being unable to identify one's antecedents, one's ancestry.

Like others in this chamber, my own family, my dear lovely cousin Kim is adopted and she is my age. I remember, over the course of the last 25 years, spending a whole lot of time with her doing amateur sleuthing, looking for her birth family. Of course, she was adopted

as a baby. She grew up as a part of my family. In her case, it was a delightful, wonderful experience. She found her birth mother and also a natural brother—because she has no siblings of her own—with whom she has developed a great relationship.

But I do want to acknowledge and say this—again, Michael Prue is going to be speaking more fully to the Belobaba decision and to the content of the bill—we, in this chamber, allowed the powerful and emotional appeal of persons in that adoption community to generate a zealotry on our part that then led us to overlook some of the very obvious.

Ann Cavoukian is our privacy commissioner, an officer of this assembly, a non-partisan personality, who has distinguished herself in so many ways as the commissioner of privacy here in the province of Ontario, and prior to that, as an employee of that office. Ann Cavoukian was unequivocal—absolute and oh so clear—about the fact that Bill 183's failure to include disclosure vetoes was a serious breach of the privacy rights of mothers.

You heard the member from York–Simcoe read you some of the stories that were presented to the committee through Ms. Cavoukian and others, of parents, mothers, who feared the impact of Bill 183.

One of the arguments made was, "Well, not every mother was promised confidentiality"; you'll recall that. In fact, there were people who came forward and said, "I wasn't promised confidentiality." But to go from that point to the next point and somehow argue that no mother was guaranteed confidentiality is simply absurd. In fact, when Ann Cavoukian, the privacy commissioner, appeared on May 18, 2005, before the social policy committee, she said: "You may have heard from others that no promises of confidentiality were ever made to birth parents in the past. To that, I say, nonsense." She then goes on to tell that committee, "But I assure you that all of the people whom I've heard from—and whom you're about to hear from; you're going to hear their words—were all promised confidentiality." So while there may well have been mothers who weren't promised confidentiality, there remains the fact that there were huge numbers of women who were promised confidentiality.

Ms. Cavoukian pleaded with the members of that committee and this assembly to not pass legislation that didn't contain a disclosure veto in her appearance before the committee on social policy back on May 18, 2005. In a letter dated May 16, 2005, where she documented it in writing prior to attendance before the committee, she wrote: "A disclosure veto for past adoptions is imperative to protect those who were assured that their confidentiality would be protected. To do less would be tantamount to turning your collective backs on birth parents and adopted persons who were promised privacy, regardless of the consequences."

It was only but two days after the bill was proclaimed that the Superior Court of Justice overturned those sections which permitted disclosure without veto as being contrary to the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. I want to



commend lawyer Clay Ruby for his advocacy in that matter. I say to the people who are disappointed with that decision that surely the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, the Canadian constitution—unless one in fact doesn't believe that it's a suitable foundation document—has got to prevail over the will or wishes, however zealous and well-intended, of legislators.

But I say this—and on behalf of the New Democratic Party, I tell you, I apologize to Ann Cavoukian; I do, unequivocally and without hesitation; she did her job, she did it well and she did it professionally—we preferred not to follow her advice. We were wrong. We were very, very wrong. We failed to display the courage that should be expected of legislators and of parliamentarians, who sometimes have to make choices which are in conflict with the will of their constituents, if those choices are in contravention of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. The public has got to understand that. Our responsibility isn't just to the instant issue; it's to the long term.

I take this opportunity to again apologize, to express our regret to Ann Cavoukian, to thank her for her exceptional assistance in this particular matter, and to perhaps remind ourselves that when we have respected officers of the assembly who give us learned counsel and guidance, it would serve us and our constituents well to abide by that counsel and advice.

1610

**Mr. Khalil Ramal:** Thank you for giving me a chance to stand up and speak in support of Bill 12, the Access to Adoption Records Act, 2008.

I want to echo the Minister of Community and Social Services and other members who spoke about the issue, because it's a very important issue. After 80 years of secrecy surrounding adoptions, we are finally proposing to open the records and give the majority of adults who were adopted as children the chance to learn more about themselves and their birth parents. This has been a long time coming.

The sealing of adoption records is the legacy of a different age in Ontario. In the past, the identities of adoptees and birth parents were kept hidden from each other because the prevailing attitude toward adoption dictated that adoptees, birth parents and adoptive parents needed to be protected from the social stigma associated with being unmarried, poor, coping with mental illness or addiction, and other reasons that children were placed for adoption. The shame associated with getting pregnant out of wedlock forced young mothers to hand over their newborn babies to the state or religious organizations. Imagine the loss those young mothers must have felt in that moment. And they would have to carry it for the rest of their lives—permanently exiled from their children.

A birth mother needs to know what happened to the child she gave up. As one birth mother wrote, "I have never yet once in 18 years found a birth mother who did not wish to know what happened to her child.... It's a human situation."

And adoptees have many unanswered questions. Adoptees need to know, "Who am I?" It's about more

than just their genetic history. It's about feeling like they know their identity and their origins. As one adoptee wrote, "Can we truly be ourselves if we don't know where we came from? I'm almost 40 now and I still have questions about my origins. Why do I look the way I do? Where did I get my personality?"

Notre société a changé. Aujourd'hui, les gens rejettent le code du silence qui était associé à l'adoption. L'Ontario a évolué depuis l'époque où les adoptions se faisaient en secret et où l'on se gardait bien d'en informer l'enfant. Refuser aux parents de sang et aux personnes adoptées des renseignements identificatoires tels que leur nom et prénom ne fait que perpétuer le climat de honte et de secret. Les gens devraient pouvoir connaître leur histoire personnelle.

Our government has long maintained that people who are involved in adoption should have the same ability as non-adopted people to learn about their past and their family. Our overhaul of adoption disclosure laws will help most adoptees and birth parents get the information they are looking for.

At the same time, we recognize there will be some individuals who don't want others to have access to any of their personal information. Some people want control over the use of their personal information. That's why our legislation includes protections that respect the privacy of those involved in past adoptions. Adopted adults and birth parents involved in past adoptions who wish to maintain their privacy may file a disclosure veto prohibiting the release of any information from their files or file a no-contact notice prohibiting personal contact where information is disclosed. Anyone who chooses to use a disclosure veto will be able to voluntarily provide their medical history so that adoptees may be able to obtain important health information.

Going forward, people involved in future adoptions will have the option of placing a no-contact notice on their file. This means that people will get the information they need, but the law will protect them from any unwanted intrusion. They won't have to renew a connection if they don't want to. Anyone who breaches the notice could face a \$50,000 fine.

Ce système, qui est en place dans d'autres juridictions où l'on a donné accès aux dossiers, fonctionne très bien. Par contre, les personnes qui veulent être contactées peuvent enregistrer un avis du mode de communication préféré afin d'en informer un parent de sang ou une personne adoptée.

The doors would be wide open for them. They are free to make decisions about their own lives. I quote an editorial from the *Toronto Star*: "Adopted adults are just that—adults. We can and do make decisions about our own lives every day. Like every other adult in the province, we have a right to know who we are." April 2005, page F7.

This is good legislation. It's thoughtful and responsible. It is balanced. This bill, if passed, would give adopted adults and birth parents access to identifying information in their adoption records, information about



their personal past, information so many people have wanted for so long.

But for people who want to leave their past in the past, our proposed legislation includes a retroactive information disclosure veto for those involved in past adoptions. This means that people involved in past adoptions can choose to prevent the release of any identifying information from their records.

C'est une approche qui respecte la décision de la Cour supérieure de justice et l'opinion du commissaire à l'information et à la protection de la vie privée de l'Ontario. Ceci respecte également la vie privée d'un individu qui, pour des raisons tout à fait personnelles, désire conserver l'anonymat.

They won't have to disclose their identities. Under the proposed bill, the veto would be available for people who have their adoption records made in Ontario before September 1, 2008. Anyone who chooses to use a disclosure veto would have the option to voluntarily provide their medical history so that birth relatives may be able to obtain important health information.

It has taken years to get to this point, years to get this piece of legislation just right. I encourage all the members of this House to support this legislation. It will help us usher in a new era of progress for Ontario's adoption. Let's move forward and pass this bill.

**Mr. Michael Prue:** I'm mindful of the time, but there are a few things that need to be said.

I stand here in support of the bill today—and I think all members in the House should support the bill—but I am also mindful of the reason that we are here. We have heard some flowery speeches and rationale, but we are here for one reason, and that is because the learned Judge Ed Belobaba in his decision made a ruling to which this Legislature must respond. The learned judge of course was right, that the Legislature had overlooked some of the aspects of the bill which we should not have overlooked. He gave us an opportunity to repair the bill so that it will meet the constitutional safeguards which we as legislators must always endeavour to obey.

I am mindful of the long period of time it has taken for this bill to get to this stage. Surely, it has occupied the greater part of the time that I have spent in this Legislature. In looking at the background to the bill, I see that the bill for adoption disclosure was first put forward by my former colleague Marilyn Churley on December 2, 1998. It was brought forward a second time in June 2000. It was brought forward a third time on June 28, 2001, and then again in May 2003, again in December 2003, and finally culminated in a government bill, Bill 183, which was passed by the Legislature in 2005.

1620

As I said, it took a long time for all of this to happen. It is a bill that's very close to my heart, because I had an opportunity on all of the occasions since my arrival here in 2001 to debate the merits of this particular bill and to stand shoulder to shoulder with my then colleague Marilyn Churley, who was from Toronto-Danforth, as she fought to have disclosure. It was wonderful working

with her. In fact, I had worked with her for many years. There was one day, unbeknownst to me that she even had a son, when I opened up the Toronto Star—I had known Marilyn Churley for some 10 years prior to that—to read that wonderful story of how she had given her son up for adoption and how she had taken all those many years to find him. It was quite a moving experience that committed me to help her and to ensure that her dream came true.

We all voted—at least in the New Democratic Party and, I believe, all members of the government Liberal Party at that occasion—for final passage in the last Parliament. We did not heed, as my colleague from Wexford had to say, the advice of the privacy commissioner. I believe we did not heed the advice of the privacy commissioner because we wanted to have the strongest bill possible in the world in order to accommodate people finding their natural birth parents and adults finding their children who had been given up for adoption. We likened it after what had happened in Australia and some other jurisdictions and believed that Ontario could follow the same route. Unfortunately, that was not the case and Judge Belobaba told us so in his ruling.

What is happening now in this bill is simply to remedy that error which was made; nothing more, nothing less. It will continue the bill and the dream of my former colleague Marilyn Churley to make sure that people can find their families following an adoption. What it ensures now is that from this time forward, or certainly from September of this year forward, all new adoptions will be fully discloseable.

I'd just like to talk about Marilyn Churley's take on all this, because she is not here today. I was with Marilyn Churley on the day that the decision was to be rendered. She was knocking on doors with me. It was during the last provincial election. She was trying to help me in the riding of Beaches-East York. We were knocking on doors, and she told me that she had to go that afternoon because she had to go down to the courthouse to hear the decision. She was a little worried about what that decision might be, but she was bound and determined that she was going to be there with the members of the adoption community, that she was going to be there to hear first-hand what the ruling was going to state and that she was going to make herself available to the press to comment, no matter what had happened. I did not see her for the balance of that day, but I did see her the next day when she had come back. Of course, she was sad, of course she was upset and of course she wished that the ruling had gone the other way. But she told me forthrightly on that day, and I convey that to the Legislature at this time, that she believed that we had to comply with the ruling of the learned judge. She believed that there was no alternative, save and except what had been put forward, and that the rights of individuals who had been promised anonymity had to be respected. She asked me, if we had an opportunity and this bill came back before the House, to support the bill. She asked me, in supporting the bill, to ensure that the rights and privileges

of those people who had given their children up for adoption in the past and wished anonymity would be respected. But she also asked, and I think the bill conveys this, that all future cases would be free from that provision.

I think Marilyn would be happy to be here in the Legislature today, and I know that if she were here in the Legislature she would be supporting this bill. She believes in the rights of individuals; she has fought her whole life for those rights. She believes in the rights of adoptees and of those who adopted them. We really have no alternative, given the decision, but to follow Judge Belobaba's recommendations, and I believe that this legislation does precisely that.

I am heartened by the fact that the right to register a disclosure veto is, from this point on, only possible for adoption orders that are made before September 1, 2008, and, thereafter, every adoption order made will be freely accessible to all parties. I am also heartened that there is a provision that will allow for the—disclosure seekers would be asked to voluntarily provide medical history so that in the event that a life-threatening illness happens to someone, they will be able to go back and trace the history, although it may be anonymously, because that was an important provision of what we discussed when Bill 183 was passed into law.

I think that is about all I need to say on this bill. I do encourage members on all sides of the House to support it. I am mindful that when it was before the House

previously, many members in the Conservative Party chose not to, but I believe, in retrospect, that was for a very good reason: because most of them, when they spoke against the bill, spoke about the privacy provisions. Now that they have been remedied by this bill, I believe that all members of this Legislature should move forward, pass the bill and do what is right and what Marilyn Churley fought for so many years in this House to accomplish.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson):** I thank the honourable member from Beaches–East York for his contributions to the debate. Further debate?

There being no further debate, Madame Meilleur has moved second reading of Bill 12. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

*Second reading agreed to.*

**Hon. Madeleine Meilleur:** Monsieur le Président, I would ask that the bill be referred to the standing committee on social policy.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson):** Agreed? Agreed.

**Hon. David Caplan:** Speaker, I move adjournment of the House.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson):** Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

This House stands adjourned until Monday, April 7, at 1:30 p.m.

*The House adjourned at 1627.*



**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO**  
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Barrett, Toby (PC)	Haldimand–Norfolk	
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<b>Carroll, Hon. / L'hon. M. Aileen (L)</b>	Barrie	Minister of Culture, minister responsible for seniors / ministre de la Culture, ministre déléguée aux Affaires des personnes âgées Minister of Citizenship and Immigration / ministre des Affaires civiques et de l'Immigration
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Chudleigh, Ted (PC)	Halton	
Colle, Mike (L)	Eglinton–Lawrence	
Craitor, Kim (L)	Niagara Falls	
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Dhillon, Vic (L)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Dickson, Joe (L)	Ajax–Pickering	
DiNovo, Cheri (ND)	Parkdale–High Park	
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<b>Duguid, Hon. / L'hon. Brad (L)</b>	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	
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Van Bommel, Maria (L)	Lambton—Kent—Middlesex	
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Khalil Ramal, Laurie Scott, Peter Shurman  
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First Session, 39<sup>th</sup> Parliament

**Assemblée législative  
de l'Ontario**

Première session, 39<sup>e</sup> législature

**Official Report  
of Debates  
(Hansard)**

**Journal  
des débats  
(Hansard)**

**Monday 7 April 2008**

**Lundi 7 avril 2008**

Speaker  
Honourable Steve Peters

Président  
L'honorable Steve Peters

Clerk  
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Greffière  
Deborah Deller



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## LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 7 April 2008

## ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 7 avril 2008

*The House met at 1330.  
Prayers.*

### MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

#### TARTAN DAY

**Mr. Bill Murdoch:** I would like to take this opportunity to thank all the people who remembered to don something plaid yesterday in celebration of Tartan Day, in honour of the Scottish people and their accomplishments and contributions to sports, science, technology and the economy in North America.

It also brings me great honour to show off my kilt on Tartan Day. This tartan I'm wearing was handmade by Marlene Reid of Scottish Imports in Hamilton. Her dad, James MacNeil, in conjunction with the Scottish studies department at the University of Guelph, designed the official Ontario tartan.

I'd also like to take this moment to thank Lillian Ross, a former MPP from Hamilton, who first brought the idea of Ontario having its own official tartan to this House. It was 17 years ago when I introduced my resolution to name April 6 as Tartan Day in Ontario. As you know, April 6, 1320, was the day when the Declaration of Arbroath was signed and Scotland was declared an independent and sovereign state.

Scotland has had an immense impact on Ontario. In fact, you would be hard pressed to find even one aspect of our culture, laws or government that was not positively impacted by the Scots. This is our heritage.

The tartan is justifiably a representative symbol for all Ontarians, even in our multicultural society. And for all those members who are not of Scottish descent but wish they were, they can rest assured that they now have a real clan to belong to.

#### BRAMPTON SOCCER CENTRE

**Mrs. Linda Jeffrey:** Last June, the city of Brampton celebrated one of the world's favourite sports with the grand opening of the Brampton Soccer Centre. The event included a community barbecue, a giant soccer cake, tours and an open house featuring the new 156,000-square-foot facility.

The Brampton Soccer Centre, located at the corner of Dixie Road and Sandalwood Parkway, is Brampton's newest recreational facility and includes four indoor soccer fields, four outdoor fields, two overlapping cricket pitches, as well as a spray pad and community meeting

rooms. It's anticipated that 64,000 soccer players will use the facility during an eight-month indoor season. This facility is one of four major capital recreation projects approved by the city of Brampton in 2005, part of its \$120-million Making Great Things Happen initiative.

This summer, the centre will offer summer sports camps, youth development programs, pre-school programs, dance programs and indoor soccer. This fall, the soccer centre offered seniors' programming, pre-school, dance, youth program and indoor soccer.

The Brampton Soccer Centre won a 2008 design excellence award from the Ontario Association of Architects, along with other 14 other projects across Ontario. All that remains is the People's Choice Award. The project with the most votes will win when voting ends on April 11. So I humbly ask my colleagues in the House and people across Ontario to visit the Ontario Association of Architects website and vote for the Brampton Soccer Centre. It's a facility that will promote a healthy lifestyle and embraces the multicultural interests of my community.

#### SERENA RYDER

**Ms. Laurie Scott:** It gives me great pleasure to tell you today that the new face and the future of Canadian music comes from none other than the wonderful town of Millbrook, in my riding of Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock. This weekend in Calgary, Ontario singer-songwriter Serena Ryder was recognized as the Juno Awards recipient in the category of best new artist.

Ms. Ryder grew up in the heart of farming country near Millbrook, and she gives credit to that small-town community for much of her inspiration. She began performing there at the age of seven.

Even though she is now only in her mid-20s, she has firmly planted her foot in both the Canadian and international music scene. She has worked with names of other famous Canadians such as Frank Davies and the Guess Who's Randy Bachman. Serena Ryder is recognized for her musical creativity, her incredible and haunting voice, along with the warmth and wisdom of her lyrics. USA Today has stated that Serena Ryder is "an important fixture on the music scene."

There's a saying I've heard a few times: "If this is the first time you've heard Serena Ryder, take note, because it most certainly won't be the last." I certainly agree: This musician, Serena Ryder, has engrained in her the spirit of rural Ontario and a passion for her craft.



As the member of provincial Parliament for the riding of Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock, I am pleased to extend my heartfelt congratulations to the pride of Millbrook, Serena Ryder, for winning the 2008 Juno Award for best new artist.

### GOVERNMENT'S RECORD

**Mr. Bob Delaney:** I'd like to speak a little bit about what a budget can do. For the last two weeks, I've been hearing from people in Mississauga about the impact of not merely the budget our government has just presented but the budgets it had presented before.

A budget isn't just an exercise in economic theory; it's a living document that describes what a difference it can make in the lives of 13 million people.

In Mississauga, some 700,000 people are already better off. Capital expansion is under way at Trillium and will soon be at Credit Valley Hospital, from some of the initiatives begun by the introduction of the health premium in 2004. We have three new linear accelerators in the regional cancer centre at Credit Valley, all delivered ahead of schedule. Our wait times are down and we have more funded procedures.

The 2005 budget made a difference in our post-secondary system in Mississauga. The University of Toronto at Mississauga has a new medical school and Credit Valley has a new family medicine teaching unit.

Infrastructure made a difference in 2006, with some \$65 million to the Mississauga Transitway and \$95 million to the Brampton AcceleRide. In both cases, the cheque is in the bank.

This year's budget will get both Mississauga and Brampton working in our communities to cut gridlock with Move Ontario and with \$9.5 million for repairs to roads and bridges. It sure beats two cents off on a cup of coffee at Tim Hortons.

### DIAGNOSTIC SERVICES

**Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer:** Today I introduce a resolution calling on the government to recognize PET scans as a vital diagnostic tool for care and to finally introduce an implementation plan with time lines to achieve the same level of access to PET scanning here as we already have in Alberta, British Columbia, Quebec and Manitoba.

PET scans are still considered an experimental technology in Ontario, despite more than five years of trials and their widespread use throughout the world, and the fact that leading experts in the field acknowledge that this technology will let you know if you are a candidate for surgery, radiation, or if you need chemotherapy.

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In the United States, data have demonstrated that 38% of patients had their treatment changed to a more appropriate therapy as a result of their PET scan findings. Today, since Ontario limits access to PETs, Ontario patients must travel outside of this province, usually to the

United States, and often pay for PETs themselves, this despite the fact that we have the second-largest PET base in Canada.

Indeed, the single PET centre in Manitoba helps more patients each year than the entire PET registry program in Ontario. In Quebec during 2006, for every 30 patients investigated with the PET scan, only one patient was scanned in Ontario. It is unbelievable. I urge the government to make access available for all Ontarians.

### ONTARIO DRUG BENEFIT PROGRAM

**Mr. Peter Kormos:** Back in 2005, when Health Canada approved the drug Avastin, the Canadian colorectal cancer society said, "Canadian colorectal patients will finally have the opportunity to benefit from a treatment that has become part of the standard of care for metastatic colorectal cancer in the United States." Provinces like British Columbia, Newfoundland, Quebec and Saskatchewan have, since the approval by Health Canada, approved payment for that drug for victims of colorectal cancer in those provinces. Ontario hasn't.

What that means is that people like Kevin Bigford—his mom, Mary Bigford, lives down in Port Colborne, a community I'm proud to represent; she's a retired nurse. Her son, an elementary schoolteacher about 35 years old, suffering from colorectal cancer, can't access Avastin unless he pays the costly price out of pocket.

This Liberal government is sustaining, maintaining and building a two-tier privatized health care system. What else do you call it, when the rich can get treated and the poor do without?

I say it's time that this government recognized the authority of Health Canada. When Health Canada, with its stringent standards, approves a drug as part of a treatment program, it's incumbent upon this government, if it has any belief in public health care at all, to fund that drug. It's time for Avastin to be funded.

This government talks a big game about being checked for colorectal cancer, but if you're detected with colorectal cancer, you can't treat it unless you're wealthy in Dalton McGuinty's Ontario.

### EVENTS IN HAMILTON

**Ms. Sophia Aggelonitis:** Mr. Speaker, I would like to tell you and the other members of this House about the great things that are happening in Hamilton. On Friday, April 4, the Premier visited my riding of Hamilton Mountain to announce that this summer the Ontario government will help young people in Hamilton enjoy basketball clinics, art classes and leadership training at area schools. I want to thank the principal of Hill Park Secondary School, Mr Rick Hart, and vice-principal Mr. Colin Hazell for their warm reception.

On April 3, I attended the 10th annual Tourism Hamilton Awards, held at Carmen's Banquet Centre, located on Hamilton Mountain. It was a fantastic event, and we were pleased to have the Minister of Tourism,

Mr. Peter Fonseca, attend the event. There were over 540 people in attendance. I'd like to congratulate David Adames, executive director of Tourism Hamilton, and his hard-working team for an outstanding event. The winners were chosen from among over 120 nominees by a nine-member judging panel. There were 20 award categories, covering a range of tourism contributors from businesses to marketing campaigns to individuals. Award winners received a handmade original glass trophy. These were designed by Shirley Elford, an internationally celebrated glass-blower who is a Hamiltonian.

I'd like to congratulate all the winners for their success. These individuals and organizations are vital to the success of Hamilton, and I applaud them for their efforts.

### TRANSIT FUNDING

**Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn:** As one of the many members who live in the GTA, I was quite pleased that public transit was one of the key priorities in this year's budget. Many of my constituents rely on public transit get them to work in a timely and reliable manner. And of course, by having more people use transit, we take more cars off the road, and this leads to less congestion and pollution.

In this budget, the government announced its commitment to provide funding for all of Metrolinx's recommended quick-win projects. That's right: every single one of them. This would be a total investment of over \$744 million into a number of important public transit projects.

Not only does this investment represent this government's commitment to the use of public transit, but it also signifies our commitment to creating and maintaining safe and reliable infrastructure for all of Ontario. Infrastructure investments create jobs, improve access to markets and support business investment. Safe and modern infrastructure is a major consideration when businesses are deciding where they are going to set up shop.

Investing in public transit is one of the many ways this government is embracing and promoting the idea of sustainable communities, a clean environment and smart growth in Ontario.

### ONTARIO PUBLIC SERVICE

**Mr. Dave Levac:** I rise in the House today to address some recent comments made by the travelling leader of the Progressive Conservative Party. It seems the leader of that party has taken his cue from his predecessors and has decided to wage war against Ontario's public service, 6,700 strong, who work to ensure that Ontarians are well educated, safe and healthy.

For some reason, he's been especially sharp and harsh when it comes to policy analysis, saying that they sit around breathing each other's exhaust and reading each other's papers. Aside from the fact that this is completely insulting to those fine, intellectually hard-working people in this province, he fails to understand the importance of

their job. They ensure that this and all governments remain accountable to Ontarians by analyzing policies to ensure that they are indeed accountable.

Does the party across the floor not remember what happened when they did cut services? Does "water inspectors" ring a bell over there? They fired meat inspectors who could have prevented the tainted meat scandals. The nurses were cut and compared to hula hoop workers, putting Ontarians at risk.

It seems that the leader of the opposition chooses to forget what the terrible consequences were when his party made reckless cuts to the public sector. This government will not be repeating their mistakes; indeed, we've made a commitment to improve it. Will the government continue to invest to provide us with responsible government? You bet we will.

### INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

#### BILL OF RIGHTS FOR PUPILS WITH DIABETES, 2008

#### CHARTRE DES DROITS DES ÉLÈVES DIABÉTIQUES DE 2008

Mr. Levac moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 52, An Act to establish a bill of rights for pupils with diabetes / Projet de loi 52, Loi établissant une charte des droits pour les élèves diabétiques.

**The Speaker:** Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

*First reading agreed to.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** The member for a short statement.

**Mr. Dave Levac:** This bill, if passed, will provide a bill of rights for children with diabetes and require school officials to assist with the care of the diabetes at school. This bill of rights secures various diabetes treatments, such as blood sugar checks, hypoglycemia treatments, and insulin injections; eating snacks and lunches at the appropriate times; free and unrestricted access to water and washrooms; and full participation in physical education classes, gym classes and other extracurricular activities, including field trips. Unfortunately, this bill is required as some of our kids with diabetes do not have that clear access.

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#### 719226 ONTARIO LIMITED ACT, 2008

Ms. Jaczek moved first reading of the following bill:  
Bill Pr8, An Act to revive 719226 Ontario Limited.

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

*First reading agreed to.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Pursuant to standing order 84, this bill stands referred to the standing committee on regulations and private bills.



CONSUMER PROTECTION  
AMENDMENT ACT (ADVERTISING  
FOOD OR DRINK), 2008  
LOI DE 2008 MODIFIANT  
LA LOI SUR LA PROTECTION  
DU CONSOMMATEUR  
(PUBLICITÉ SUR LES ALIMENTS  
OU BOISSONS)

Mr. Marchese moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 53, An Act to amend the Consumer Protection Act, 2002 with respect to the advertising of food or drink / Projet de loi 53, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2002 sur la protection du consommateur à l'égard de la publicité visant les aliments ou boissons.

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

*First reading agreed to.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** The member for a short statement.

**Mr. Rosario Marchese:** Parents are very worried about the health of their children, and particularly worried about obesity.

We know that marketers spend billions of dollars targeting kids, and so we say, just as the board of health says, that what kids watch on television as it relates to the ads, as it relates to the products, is very rich in calories and very poor in nutrients. What we want to do is give parents another tool to protect their children. Our bill is intended to prohibit commercial advertising for food or drink that is directed at persons under 13 years of age. We believe parents will support it and we hope it will become law.

PAYDAY LOANS ACT, 2008  
LOI DE 2008 SUR LES PRÊTS  
SUR SALAIRE

Ms. DiNovo moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 54, An Act respecting payday loans / Projet de loi 54, Loi traitant des prêts sur salaire.

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

*Interjection.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** The member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke will come to order, please.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

*First reading agreed to.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** The member for a short statement.

**Ms. Cheri DiNovo:** I want to acknowledge Bob Whitelaw in the members' gallery, a former president of the payday lending association.

Despite the government's do-nothing bill, 1,000% interest is still being charged to our poorest and most

vulnerable Ontarians. Carol Goar said it best: "1,000% Interest 1,000% Wrong."

What my bill does is cap the interest rate at 35%. We are now the last of all the provinces enacting. Let us act. Pass my bill.

## MOTIONS

### HOUSE SITTINGS

**Hon. Michael Bryant:** I move that, pursuant to standing order 9(c)(i), the House shall meet from 6:45 p.m. to 9:30 p.m. on Monday, April 7, 2008, for the purpose of considering government business.

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour will say "aye."

All those opposed will say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

*The division bells rang from 1355 to 1400.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Members please take their seats.

Mr. Bryant has moved government notice of motion number 36. All those in favour will please stand one at a time to be recorded by the Clerk.

### Ayes

Aggelonitis, Sophia	Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Oraziotti, David
Arthurs, Wayne	Fonseca, Peter	Pupatello, Sandra
Balkissoon, Bas	Gerretsen, John	Qaadri, Shafiq
Bartolucci, Rick	Gravelle, Michael	Ramal, Khalil
Bentley, Christopher	Hoy, Pat	Ramsay, David
Best, Margaret	Jaczek, Helena	Ruprecht, Tony
Bradley, James J.	Jeffrey, Linda	Smith, Monique
Brown, Michael A.	Kular, Kuldip	Smitherman, George
Bryant, Michael	Levac, Dave	Sousa, Charles
Cansfield, Donna H.	Mangat, Amrit	Takhar, Harinder S.
Colle, Mike	Matthews, Deborah	Watson, Jim
Crozier, Bruce	Mauro, Bill	Wilkinson, John
Delaney, Bob	McNeely, Phil	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Dhillon, Vic	Meilleur, Madeleine	Zimmer, David
Dickson, Joe	Milloy, John	
Duguid, Brad	Moridi, Reza	

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** All those opposed will rise one at a time to be recorded by the Clerk.

### Nays

Chudleigh, Ted	MacLeod, Lisa	Runciman, Robert W.
DiNovo, Cheri	Martiniuk, Gerry	Savoline, Joyce
Elliott, Christine	Miller, Norm	Scott, Laurie
Gélinas, France	Miller, Paul	Shurman, Peter
Hardeman, Ernie	Munro, Julia	Sterling, Norman W.
Horwath, Andrea	Murdoch, Bill	Tabuns, Peter
Hudak, Tim	O'Toole, John	Witmer, Elizabeth
Kormos, Peter	Prue, Michael	Yakabuski, John

**The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller):** The ayes are 46; the nays are 24.

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** I declare the motion carried.

*Agreed to.*

## PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

**Hon. Michael Bryant:** I seek unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding private members' public business.

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Agreed? Agreed.

**Hon. Michael Bryant:** I move that, notwithstanding order 96(d), the following changes be made to the ballot list of private members' public business:

That Mrs. Mangat and Mrs. Jeffrey exchange places in order of precedence such that Mrs. Mangat assumes ballot item 52 and Mrs. Jeffrey assumes ballot item 22; and that Mr. Wilson and Mr. Chudleigh exchange places in order of precedence such that Mr. Wilson assumes ballot item 55 and Mr. Chudleigh assumes ballot item 11.

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

*Agreed to.*

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY  
AND RESPONSES

## RESEARCH AND INNOVATION

**Hon. John Wilkinson:** I'm proud to rise in the House today to speak about the government's commitment to economic prosperity through innovation. Specifically, I'd like to speak about Ontario's commitment to generating the next generation of skilled jobs in the digital media sector.

The reality is the world is changing, and change is happening at an ever-faster pace. Our government sees the challenges arising from this change but, more importantly, we see the tremendous opportunities it presents for Ontario, not only because of the riches of our land and what we build in our factories but also because of what we can imagine, invent and create.

Innovation and ingenuity are not new to Ontario. They are embedded in this province's shared conscience. They're actually in our DNA. We have built our economy and become the economic engine of this great country through the innovation and ingenuity of our people, from the discovery of insulin and stem cells to creating the landing gear that put Neil Armstrong on the moon, and of course the launch of the BlackBerry.

The reality is that in the 21st century, in our global economy it is inevitable that someone somewhere will always eventually be able to copy a product or technology and produce it at a lower cost. But it is much more difficult to compete against talent and imagination.

Rather than trying to foresee the future, we are giving Ontarians the tools they need to invent it. We're helping young people develop their skills and ignite their imaginations. It's part of our five-point economic plan to ensure that this province achieves its tremendous potential. We're cutting business taxes to ensure innovative businesses can compete and, moreover, we propose to be the first jurisdiction in North America to provide a 10-year

corporate tax holiday for new companies commercializing Canadian intellectual property.

As well, we're making the largest investment ever in Ontario's infrastructure. We're also investing in the skills of people. Ontario is now the home to the greatest concentration of people per capita with a post-secondary education in the G7. We're partnering with businesses in key sectors where Ontario has enormous potential to compete and win in the global marketplace. We're committed to an aggressive innovation agenda, bringing all these pieces together to improve our environment for innovation, so that our province and our people are equipped to continually reinvent ourselves to yet a new level of prosperity.

That's why we're taking a bold, focused approach, targeting sectors where we punch above our weight in research, industry and innovation, where we already are, or can become, global leaders.

Ontario's entertainment and digital media sector is one of these areas. Today I want to outline how Ontario is investing in the next generation of digital media artists, designers, developers and entrepreneurs as part of our concerted effort to ensure the continued growth of the industries that will shape our future and create Ontario's next generation of jobs and prosperity for our children and grandchildren.

Ontario is recognized as a North American leader in these new industries, with some 800 firms in the greater Toronto area alone. The global market for the digital media sector alone is projected to reach \$1.48 trillion by 2009. Ontario's entertainment and creative cluster is already growing twice as fast as the rest of the economy. In fact, over the past decade more than 80,000 new jobs in this sector have been created in Ontario.

That's why the 2008 budget, which outlined our government's plan for skills training, infrastructure investments, lower business costs and supporting innovation, also outlined a new \$9-million investment at the Ontario College of Art and Design that will help create new research and training programs in digital media. OCAD will use the funds for its digital futures initiative, a digital media and interactive design lab that will bring together students and private sector partners from a cross-section of industries.

The lab will graduate students who have business and computer science knowledge as well as skills in industrial design and artistic content creation. Working closely with industry leaders like Xerox, IBM, Microsoft, Philips and Astral Media, OCAD is a driving force in training Ontario's brightest workers for tomorrow's jobs in highly specialized sectors like interactive gaming, animation and advertising, to list just a few.

This strategic investment builds on another recently announced budget initiative: \$10 million to help the University of Waterloo create a new Stratford campus and research and innovation centre focused on the convergence of global business and global digital media. There is no other place in the world that has that aspiration. This project will have the support of Canada's largest software



company, Open Text, whose pioneering innovations formed the basis for the Internet's first search engine technology.

The new campus will generate the next generation of digital media researchers, entrepreneurs, products and services by bringing together Stratford's globally renowned strengths in arts and culture and the University of Waterloo's globally recognized strengths in technology. Areas of digital media research and development at the new campus will include mobile, wireless, sound, video, gaming, Web design and animation.

The goal of Ontario's investments in digital media is to ensure that Ontario remains at the cutting edge of what many, including OCAD's president Sara Diamond, call "a blisteringly hot" emerging global market, so when the next Google or iPhone is developed, jobs will be created here in Ontario.

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By focusing and investing in our strengths, we're supporting more Ontarians and creating more Ontario firsts like IMAX, Open Text and Canadarm, innovative Ontario-made products and services that are improving the lives of millions of people around the world while creating a stronger economy and good jobs at home.

Investing in research and innovation is a priority for our government because we believe it is the best way to capitalize on Ontario's greatest competitive advantage: our people and their ingenuity. Coupled with our government's \$1.15-billion Next Generation of Jobs Fund, which has a stated area of focus in digital media, I believe our government is now moving to seize a global opportunity.

In fact, there is an old Chinese proverb that says, "If you want one year of prosperity, grow grain. If you want 10 years of prosperity, grow trees. If you want 100 years of prosperity, grow people." We recognize that if Ontario is to succeed in the 21st century, we need everyone at their best, working together for the good of all.

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Responses?

## RESEARCH AND INNOVATION

**Ms. Laurie Scott:** I'm pleased to respond today on behalf of the official opposition to the statement made by the Minister of Research and Innovation. I want to acknowledge that we agree it is vital that we not only be part of research and innovative technologies available, but that we work to ensure that we are ahead of the curve when it comes to this type of forward thinking.

I must say it's interesting to hear the Minister of Research and Innovation making public statements now; it was a Liberal promise back in 2003. The Premier had the portfolio previously; he kind of tucked it under his wing for perusal later. So now we have the minister rolling out a number of announcements suggesting that it's time for Ontario to get on board. With all due respect, Ontario has been on board; to suggest otherwise would be unfair.

We know our innovation sector is rife with talent and creativity, and we certainly have the potential not just to be a leader in Canada but a global leader. In that respect, I think it's time that we provided those people with the type of economic climate that will allow them to flourish and not force them to move to another part of Canada to fulfill their ambitions and their dreams. As opposed to simply suggesting, as the Premier has, that we steel ourselves for the challenging times ahead, this government needs to pull itself out of the head-in-the-sand focus of high taxing and high spending. Ontario needs to be given an opportunity for those outside of the province to look favourably and say, "I think I'd like to invest there"—"there," as in Ontario.

This just isn't happening at this point. The untrustworthiness of the broken promises and the hidden tax increases behind the title of "user fees" is an old story. Investors know better.

The minister mentioned factories in his statement. Investors know that this province has lost over 190,000 manufacturing jobs under your government's watch. The minister also mentioned he feels he is responsible for making Ontario an economic engine. What he didn't say is that major banks have put Ontario ninth out of 10 in economic growth for the entire country.

This is an investment. Is it too late? We hope not, but you, the McGuinty Liberals, have to be leaders in the government to attract research and innovation to the province of Ontario. The jury is still out on that.

## RESEARCH AND INNOVATION

**Mr. Michael Prue:** In response to the minister, there is nothing wrong, I would say, with the announcement that is being made today—nothing wrong at all. I would like to commend the minister for what he has had to say. But what is wrong is that it is limited to the digital media sector.

I think everyone in this room, everyone in Ontario, would agree with new media. In fact, it was my honour as the mayor of East York some 15 years ago to establish a new media sector and to start spending money within the borough of East York. We were trying to attract the very same industries that this money is going to be spent on today. We believed 15 years ago that it was the way of the future, and I have never once changed my mind that it is the way of the future and that money should be spent there.

But I have to ask the members opposite, the minister opposite, the government and everyone involved, what about the 200,000 people who have lost their jobs in the past couple of years in Ontario? What about those lost jobs, with manufacturers struggling to compete, struggling to keep their doors open, struggling to keep their employees as a whole combination of factors bears down upon them?

What about the government coming forward with something novel and unique, if you can do this today for one sector, like a manufacturing investment tax credit?



Other provinces that have used that have found much benefit. In the province of Manitoba, there have been virtually no jobs lost in the manufacturing sector over the last couple of years. In only the last couple of weeks, Quebec has put together a similar platform to give a manufacturing investment tax credit. It expands and grows in areas where there are large levels of unemployment, and it seems to me that theirs is working very well as well.

There is a second troubling aspect to what the minister has said today, and that is that he is including in this expenditure monies for the gaming industry. There are many who would question whether or not that is a wise expenditure without on the other side at least seeing some monies made available for those who might become addicted. We know that video gambling is one of the most addictive features of that product. We know that when it is developed and goes online, many people can't keep their eyes off it. I note here that money is being given particularly for video gaming. As the expertise in Ontario grows, as the young people particularly who get in this field are able to sharpen their expertise and take government money to produce the finest video gaming probably in the world, we are going to have many more people addicted.

So if the government is going to spend money in this particular field, then they ought to look very carefully at video gaming and how much money they want to put in that video gaming and how they want to control how the money is spent. I certainly do not advocate getting people addicted to it, and I think the minister and all of his caucus ought to be looking very carefully if you're going to be spending the money in that area.

Just to conclude: We welcome monies in new media. We welcome anything that is going to help create jobs and prosperity in Ontario. But what we want for this group we want for everyone, and this government has an obligation to treat the 200,000 people who have lost jobs in manufacturing with the same compassion and to give the same amounts of money so that we can redevelop the skills and abilities that have made Ontario great for these last numbers of years.

In conclusion, I ask the minister to also look at the whole issue of addiction when money is being spent on video gaming. Although I recognize that it is likely to continue and that if the expertise does not come from this province it may come from elsewhere, it still is troubling that money is being spent in this way when there is so little money being spent to wean people from that addiction.

#### VISITORS

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** I ask the members to welcome today in the Speaker's gallery Dr. Malcolm Jack. Dr. Jack is the Clerk of the House of Commons of the United Kingdom Parliament. Welcome to Ontario today, Dr. Jack.

The following pages have made us aware that they have guests in the galleries today. In the west gallery is

Prakash Pandya's father, Kamlesh. We welcome you today, sir. As well, Rheanna Kendrick's father, John Kendrick, is here in the west gallery. In the west members' gallery, page Sarah Palmeter would like to welcome Margo Palmeter, her mother; Timothy Palmeter, her father; and Cameron Palmeter, her brother. Welcome today to the families of the pages.

On behalf of all members, I want to congratulate Christine Miller, the wife of the member from Parry Sound-Muskoka. This past Friday, Christine Miller graduated from the Ontario Police College and is now an Ontario Provincial Police officer. Congratulations.

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On behalf of the member for Parkdale-High Park: Mr. Robert Whitelaw, president and CEO of the Canadian Council of Better Business Bureaus, former member of the Ontario press gallery and the founding president of the Canadian Payday Loan Association. Welcome today, sir.

On behalf of the member for Nipissing, we would like to welcome Linda and Barry McConomy of Mattawa in the east members' gallery. They've been involved in a fundraising project with the Mattawa General Hospital. They've enjoyed a tour at Queen's Park today. As well, joining them earlier today was Jeff Hutcheson, a familiar face on the Canada AM show. Welcome to Queen's Park today.

On behalf of the member for Beaches-East York, we'd like to take this opportunity to welcome students from Notre Dame High School. Welcome to Queen's Park today, students.

On behalf of the member for Parry Sound-Muskoka, a grade 10 civics class will be joining us this afternoon from the Bracebridge and Muskoka Lakes Secondary School. They will be in the east visitors' gallery later. We welcome them as well.

#### ACCESS TO INFORMATION

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** On Thursday, April 3, 2008, the member for Nepean-Carleton raised a point of privilege. While the member did file notice with me as required by standing order 21(c), it did not go into sufficient detail about the nature of the point of privilege. Notwithstanding that, I did allow the member to state her point. I should mention now, only by way of reminder, that the written notice should provide more fulsome detail from any member in the future.

The member's point is related to events that occurred during a meeting of the standing committee on government agencies last Wednesday. The member will know that while committees are an arm of the House, they are masters of their own proceedings and equipped to deal with any controversy that may arise within the framework of the standing orders or any special order of the House. It is well established that Speakers will not rule on or become involved with proceedings of a committee of the House. Such matters can only come before the



House by way of a report from the committee itself and not directly to the Speaker by an individual member.

Marleau and Montpetit's House of Commons Procedure and Practice summarizes this on page 128:

"Speakers have consistently ruled that, except in the most extreme situations, they will only hear questions of privilege arising from committee proceedings upon presentation of a report from the committee which directly deals with the matter and not as a question of privilege raised by an individual member."

Examples of numerous decisions of my predecessors on identical grounds can be found in the Journals for March 21, 1990, pages 285 to 286; October 24, page 316; in the Hansard for June 9, 1993, pages 396 to 397; and May 4, 1987, page 485.

If the member has a complaint with respect to the proceedings of the committee, it should be resolved there.

In closing, while every member of any committee or the Chair on behalf of a committee is perfectly entitled to direct its staff, I would like to take this opportunity to remind all members of the Legislative Assembly that members are entitled to ask research staff to provide assistance to them on an individual basis.

I thank the member for Nepean—Carleton for bringing the matter to my attention.

## ORAL QUESTIONS

### ONTARIO ECONOMY

**Mr. Robert W. Runciman:** My question is for the Premier. Once again, it's about the state of the economy: continuing job losses and plant closures, what some see as the Premier's complacency over the situation and what I think could also be interpreted as resignation. He has given up. Premier, is that what's happening here, when you tell people over the weekend to steel themselves against the slowing economy? Do you believe the situation is inevitable; it's something you can't fix? Are you waving a white flag?

**Hon. Dalton McGuinty:** I'm delighted to take the question. It is true, according to all the private sector advice that we've been receiving, that it will be some time before the Canadian dollar drops, it will be some time before the value of the price of oil drops, if at all, and it will be some time before the US economy grows stronger. Perhaps the leader of the official opposition has some access to magic solutions which we on this side of the House do not. But I can tell you that we will continue to work long and hard with and on behalf of Ontarians.

That's why in our most recent budget, for example, we put in place a new \$1.5-billion skills-to-jobs strategy. The member opposite believes that we should be cutting taxes on profitable corporations. We have a different approach. We think we should be working with Ontario families. The member opposite would cut health care, he'd cut education, and he'd cut supports for our vul-

nerable. We have a different approach. It may be that the economy is struggling, it may be that some of our families are struggling, but we will continue to work alongside our families, protect their public services, and invest in new jobs and new skills for them.

**Mr. Robert W. Runciman:** The Premier likes to say that the opposition is talking Ontario down, but the reality is, the Liberals have taken Ontario down and don't have the intestinal fortitude to admit they are wrong and do something about it.

Last week, the Weetabix plant in Cobourg laid off 27 workers; 42 workers left the Kraft plant in Northumberland; 124 people were laid off at Gencor Foods in Kitchener. Close to 200,000 manufacturing jobs have been lost since July 2004.

The Premier's response is, "This too shall pass." Premier, do you know what else passes? Kidney stones pass. Tornadoes pass. One is extremely painful and the other is quite devastating. Which of these two experiences is the Premier asking Ontarians to steel themselves for?

**Hon. Dalton McGuinty:** I think it's important to understand something about the challenging economic environment. The strengthening of the Canadian dollar since 2002 cost the Ontario economy \$65 billion in 2007. In 2007, costs for Ontario businesses were \$11 billion higher than in 2002 as a result of higher oil prices. Weakening US economic growth in 2007 and 2008 will cost the Ontario economy an estimated \$6 billion in 2008. If you put it all together—higher oil prices, a strengthening Canadian dollar, a weakening US economy—we're talking about \$82 billion in additional costs for the Ontario economy.

The opposition solution to this would be to cut our public services, close hospitals, fire nurses and make cuts to our educational opportunities for kids. We're not going that way. We'll continue to invest—

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Thank you. Final supplementary.

**Mr. Robert W. Runciman:** When the Premier said last week, I guess it was, "This too shall pass," in another part of that quote from the Toronto Star, he also said, "Trust me, folks." I guess he doesn't appreciate the irony of those words. An editorial last Friday in the Sudbury Star speaks of the Premier's "disturbing air of complacency" regarding the state of the economy, and that was before he made his comments for people to steel themselves.

The Premier has apparently given up. His budget continued to punish growth and job creation. He's thrown up his hands and said, "Let's batten down the hatches, boys. It's going to be a rough one." Ontario expects their Premier to be a good steward of the province's economy. The Premier has failed to meet that standard. I ask him if he is now prepared to take on another responsibility: responsibility for the coming recession, the McGuinty recession.

**Hon. Dalton McGuinty:** I can understand where the official opposition is coming from. They would like Ontarians to believe that we somehow have control over



the price of oil, but they don't believe that. They think that we influence the value of the dollar, but Ontarians don't believe that. They would like Ontarians to believe that somehow we influence the vigour of the US economy. Ontarians don't believe that either. I think what they're looking for is to ensure that we are investing in the kinds of things that are helpful to them—that, at a minimum, we will do them no harm; we will not cut their valuable public services—and they want to know if we're prepared to invest in new skills and training opportunities for them.

A great deal of our last budget was devoted to that. We're investing \$1.5 billion in a new skills-to-jobs strategy which includes long-term training, the first of its kind in Canada, for 20,000 Ontarians who have lost their job. Ontarians want us to continue to look for ways to invest in them without cutting their public services. That's exactly what we will do.

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### EMPLOYMENT

**Mr. Robert W. Runciman:** Back to the Premier: Since the fall of 2005, the official opposition has been drawing your attention to the growing job crisis in the manufacturing sector. Your responses have sometimes been callous and uncaring. For example, your own parliamentary assistant described communities concerned about job losses as “crying babies”; do you remember that? Or the Premier's own seeming insensitivity to layoffs at General Motors—“a little bit of contraction.”

You ignored the warnings, continued your tax-and-spend agenda, and now, with close to 200,000 manufacturing jobs lost, almost 72,000 of our sons, daughters, grandkids and husbands are forced to leave the province to find work. Is that all you can say: “Steel yourself. This too will pass”? How about an apology?

**Hon. Dalton McGuinty:** Speaker, 455,000 net new jobs since 2003. I know that the leader of the official opposition, again, is filled with gloom and doom, but I think Ontarians should understand the continuing strength we have in Ontario.

Listen to this partial list. Ontario is first when it comes to creating wealth for Canada. In fact, the next-biggest provincial economy is less than one half of Ontario's. We are first at creating new jobs. Over one third of all new Canadian jobs since 2003 were created in Ontario. We are first when it comes to head offices: 39% of Canada's head offices are here. We are first when it comes to attracting venture capital investment in new companies, and we are first when it comes to attracting venture capital from outside the country. We are first when it comes to the size of our financial services sector, first when it comes to the size of our ICT, first in business services, first in the chemical sector. That's a heck of a foundation on which to continue to build.

**Mr. Robert W. Runciman:** I think Ontarians are becoming increasingly aware of this rosy-scenario broken record the Premier and his colleagues keep reciting. On

November 21, 2005, in response to a question about job losses in manufacturing, the then Minister of Economic Development responded by suggesting the challenges were being worked through; in essence, no big deal, something like your response here today.

This government refused to heed the warnings and now, two and a half years later, they have been proven dead wrong. Countless communities and families are paying the price.

Premier, your predictions were wrong. You're on the wrong track. Instead of telling people to steel themselves, will you put some steel in your spine and bring in immediate measures to address the job loss crisis?

**Hon. Dalton McGuinty:** It is at least interesting to hear the leader of the official opposition stand up and say that we should be doing more for families that have been affected by job losses. They voted against the budget, which invested \$1.5 billion in a new skills-to-jobs strategy. They voted against our support for vulnerable families, including a new student nutrition program and investments in affordable housing.

Their solution would be to take \$5 billion out of government expenditures. They would let go nurses, water inspectors, meat inspectors and teachers the way they have in the past. That's their solution. That's their support. That's the extension of help that they offer to Ontario families.

We will continue to invest in Ontarians. We will continue to support the public services that they've got to be able to count on. Most importantly, we'll continue to invest in jobs and skills for Ontario families.

**Mr. Robert W. Runciman:** It would be unparliamentary to respond to those allegations the way they should be responded to.

Let's go back to something the current finance minister said. On November 2, 2005, in response to a question about manufacturing job losses, he defended your government's policies, saying, “What should be up is up and what should be down is down.”

Guess what? Unemployment is up. The number of personal bankruptcies is up. The number of people leaving Ontario looking for work is up. Economic growth is down. Private sector job creation is down. Everything that should be down is now up, and everything that should be up is now down.

Premier, will you now admit that you got it wrong, and will you bring in meaningful tax relief for families and businesses to get Ontario back on the right track?

**Hon. Dalton McGuinty:** It's taken six questions, but now we know what this is all about. Under the guise of lending support to families affected by job losses, the leader of the official opposition now reveals himself once again. What the Conservative Party stands for is making cuts to taxes for profitable corporations. That necessarily means cuts to health care, cuts to education, cuts to those kind of things that vulnerable people in the province of Ontario have got to be able to count on.

We're not going there. We've had that experience in the past. They closed our hospitals, they fired our nurses,



they fired our water inspectors, and they declared war on our public education. We're not going there again.

We will continue to invest in our public services. At the same time, we will continue to cut taxes in an affordable and strategic way while we invest in innovation, we invest in infrastructure, and we invest in jobs and skills training for the people of Ontario.

### MANUFACTURING JOBS

**Mr. Howard Hampton:** To the Premier. On Friday, the Premier said there are no magic solutions to address Ontario's economic downturn. My question is this: Does the McGuinty government require a magic wand to introduce a refundable manufacturing tax credit, as Manitoba and Quebec have done?

**Hon. Dalton McGuinty:** The leader of the NDP is nothing if not consistent. He's raised this very same issue a number of times over. He believes in this refundable tax credit. We've gone beyond that. In our budget, we provide \$190 million of immediate relief for manufacturers and others working in the resource sector. We think that, in combination with the cuts to capital taxes, the improvement of the capital cost allowance treatment—those kinds of things will provide immediate relief to people working in the manufacturing sector.

Again, I understand where the leader of the NDP is coming from on this score, but we've put forward something which has been well received, by the manufacturing sector in particular, and I think it'll do exactly what is needed, which is to provide them with immediate financial relief.

**Mr. Howard Hampton:** The Premier may believe that a one-time tax cut constitutes a job strategy. I can tell him that just the evidence of last week, 1,000 more jobs lost immediately after the budget, tells us all that that is not a response.

Ontario lost 25,000 full-time jobs in March, over 200,000 full-time jobs over the last three years. The unemployment rate has jumped from 6.1% to 6.4%.

My question again: Does the McGuinty government require a magic wand to establish an industrial hydro rate to help manufacturers, as Manitoba and Quebec have done?

**Hon. Dalton McGuinty:** Again, the leader of the NDP knows that we have in fact been working with our industries when it comes to managing their electricity costs. For example, we are helping northern Ontario pulp and paper mills achieve energy efficiency and sustainability by offering rebates that reduce the electricity costs of participating companies. We also have a \$140-million dollar program to reduce electricity costs by 15% over three years to allow companies to transition to a more competitive and sustainable platform.

I just think it's really important to be honest with the people of Ontario. We're into some choppy waters. It will take time before the dollar returns to some state of normalcy. It will take some time, if ever, before the price of oil drops. And it will take time before the US econ-

omy, our greatest trading partner, removes itself from its sluggish state and becomes stronger. That's going to take some time. In the meantime, we will continue to invest in public services so families can count on that, and we will continue to work with our businesses to help them grow stronger.

**Mr. Howard Hampton:** The Premier says he's helping the forest sector in northern Ontario. The only thing McGuinty has done is shut down six pulp and paper mills, downsized five others and shut down almost every sawmill in northern Ontario.

The reality is that governments in Manitoba and Quebec are taking action to sustain good manufacturing jobs and to address the economic downturn. Their Premiers are offering solutions, solutions like an industrial hydro rate, solutions like a manufacturing investment tax, solutions like adopting the Buy America policy of 50%, at least, manufacture of transit vehicles.

Can the Premier tell people across Ontario why he muses about magic wands while the Premiers in Quebec and Manitoba take real action to sustain manufacturing jobs?

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**Hon. Dalton McGuinty:** It could be understandable that folks watching this might be confused as to who's right and who's wrong, but I think we should look at an independent authority on this. We received a letter from Peter Grant, Jr., president of Grant Forest Products Inc. This is what he writes: "Your additional budget measures, including accelerating business education tax rate cuts in northern Ontario and eliminating capital tax from manufacturing and resource-based companies, will also assist in making Ontario a more competitive jurisdiction. I have to say that it's quite refreshing to see your approach of making things happen and enabling positive change. It is long overdue."

The leader of the NDP can stand up and express his opinion, but I continue to have confidence in Ontario entrepreneurs and Ontario businesses as we work together to help them grow still stronger.

### MANUFACTURING JOBS

**Mr. Howard Hampton:** This wouldn't be the same Peter Grant who shut down an OSB mill in Timmins? Oh, it is the same Peter Grant.

To the Premier again: In the United States, the Bush government believes in a laissez-faire approach to the economic downturn, and as a result thousands of jobs are being lost. In Ottawa, the Harper government believes in simply more corporate tax cuts. The only real response from the McGuinty government so far has been out of the Bush-Harper textbook: to cut the capital tax.

My next question: Can the Premier tell us why he has chosen the Bush-Harper textbook as his only measure, rather than adopting the activist path which both Quebec and Manitoba have taken in terms of policies that will really help the manufacturing sector?



**Hon. Dalton McGuinty:** I just don't see it that way. I think we've got a good, solid plan in place to help grow this economy and build on the incredibly strong foundation that we've been privileged to inherit, a strong economy that has developed over 100 years now.

When it comes to helping our manufacturing sector, we think it really is important to help struggling manufacturers by dealing with their capital cost issues. We think it's really important to deal with the capital cost allowance to reduce the capital taxes. We think it's important to deal with the business education taxes in northern Ontario. Those are all part and parcel of a comprehensive, thoughtful approach to growing the economy.

We can't be all about tax cuts, as the Conservative Party would have us be; we can't be all about new expenditures, as the NDP would have us be. We think we've found the right place to be. We are in fact cutting taxes. At the same time, we're investing in supports for our vulnerable families. We're also investing in new ways to help grow this economy. We think we've found a balance that's going to help Ontarians go to where exactly they want to go.

**Mr. Howard Hampton:** The difference is this: The McGuinty government says to manufacturers in northern Ontario, "Oh, we might cut your business education tax." In Quebec, the manufacturing tax credit for hard-hit parts of Quebec is going to be a 40% tax credit. Manufacturers in Quebec are saying that this will help them reinvest in their plants and facilities, some of which are shut down. The Premier says, "Oh, the capital cost allowance." The capital cost allowance only goes to profitable corporations. Manufacturers across Ontario aren't making any profit now, so they will not get any benefit from the capital cost allowance. That's the issue, Premier. Other provinces have developed thoughtful, practical strategies to help sustain manufacturing jobs. So far you've lectured people, you've mused about magic wands, but your only real plan is to adopt something out of the Harper-Bush textbook and simply cut one tax. When are we going to see a real jobs plan, or are we going to continue to see the loss of thousands of manufacturing—

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Thank you, Premier?

**Hon. Dalton McGuinty:** Again, the leader of the NDP is still not familiar with our five-point plan to grow this economy. I'll review that with him once again.

We're investing in our workforce; we're investing in their skills and education. In this recent budget, we put in place a new \$1.5-billion investment. We have the highest rate of post-secondary education among our workers in the western world. We're proud of that and we're going to continue to build on that. We're investing in infrastructure. We've got a 10-year, \$60-billion plan that's going to create hundreds of thousands of jobs right now, and it's going to enhance our productivity in the long term. We're investing in innovation. We want to do more to help Ontarians turn their creative ideas into new jobs and services for sale to the world. We're also investing in

tax cuts to make our manufacturers in particular more competitive. Last but not least, we're investing in partnerships. We want to enter into stronger partnerships with the business community to help them grow stronger and create more jobs. It's a comprehensive five-point plan. It may not be something the leader of the NDP likes, but I think it's exactly what Ontario needs.

**Mr. Howard Hampton:** The Premier talks about new job creation. Premier, 25,000 good, full-time jobs were lost between February and March. Every economic predictor, forecaster, is saying more jobs are going to be lost. You say that somewhere down the road, sometime, maybe, perhaps, there may be infrastructure investments. But the reality is, people are losing their jobs now, today, not just in northern Ontario, but in communities like Windsor, Hamilton, London, St. Thomas, St. Marys, and the list goes on.

Other provinces are taking real action. They recognize that an industrial hydro rate will help manufacturers stay in the province. They recognize that a refundable manufacturing investment tax will attract new investment.

Premier, your budget had none of these things. I ask again, what you've offered up isn't working. When are we going to see a real jobs plan to sustain manufacturing jobs in Ontario from the McGuinty government?

**Hon. Dalton McGuinty:** I do think it's important for us to take a look at experience in other jurisdictions, and most notably what they're doing in other provinces, but then we've got to make a decision as to what's best for our province. We have different economic characteristics than other provinces. We can't rely on stuff you pump out of the ground. We can't rely on oil and gas. Those provinces that are blessed with those attributes are seeing their economies grow at a very healthy clip.

I think what we can and must continue to do is to help our people get new and better jobs. That's why this budget devoted \$1.5 billion to a new skills-to-jobs strategy, the first of its kind in Canada. I have some sense that in other provinces, in other question periods, there will be other leaders of the official opposition asking those Premiers in those provinces, "Why don't you have the kind of job program that the McGuinty government has in Ontario?"

I think it's really important that we look at our economy and do what we think is appropriate for our workers and our families. Our plan, in short: We will not cut public services for our families, but we will invest in new job opportunities.

## EMPLOYMENT

**Mr. Ted Chudleigh:** My question is for the Premier. On Friday, StatsCan released the national job numbers based on its monthly labour force survey. The numbers looked good at first, with thousands of new jobs being created in March across Canada. However, upon closer reading, the numbers were not so uplifting in Ontario. The positive results are due to significant gains in the Canadian west and are offset by losses at home. Ontario



lost 2,000 net jobs in March, and it gets worse. Ignoring gains in part-time work, Ontario lost 24,000 full-time jobs in one month. That means the Liberal retraining program for 20,000 Ontario workers won't even cover losses for the month of March.

Premier, your patchwork programs and high-tax strategies aren't working. Unfortunately, the grim predictions of this opposition are coming true. Will you commit now to a new direction for Ontario and create a more competitive atmosphere for businesses?

**Hon. Dalton McGuinty:** To the Minister of Economic Development and Trade.

**Hon. Sandra Pupatello:** Thanks very much for the question. We do appreciate the opportunity to talk about our plan for the economic development of this province.

Our expectation is that the member for Halton, who represents a terrific manufacturing base as part of the GTA, will support the budget initiatives that were tabled in this House and are now in debate and votes. We expect to see support from this member in particular, who understands that the manufacturing sector in particular wants the elimination of capital tax retroactive to last January, that it helps them right now, that it actually produces cash in hand, a position to be able to have the government refund these manufacturing companies. We want to see \$1.5 billion being driven into a job skills action plan to take our workers and understand how we can add training for the new jobs that exist and are being created here in Ontario. We hope to have this member in particular support our budget initiatives.

**Mr. Ted Chudleigh:** The minister's optimism is endearing but inappropriate. Your government is engaged in a classic example of Peter Pan economics. That's where you sit around in a circle holding hands and wishing with all your might until things magically change for the better. Unfortunately, no amount of happy thoughts or pixie dust will fix the broken reality of Ontario's economy. Ontario just shed 24,000 jobs in 31 days. Ontario unemployment is up again, straying further from the national average. The public sector is bloated. The sunshine list is longer than ever. Ontarians are fleeing in record numbers. The manufacturing sector is in shambles. US consumers are bracing for a recession. The Premier smiles and gives us a pat on our collective head.

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Everything is not fine, Minister. Corporate handouts and retraining may save a few jobs, but what do you say to the hundreds of thousands of workers who remain unemployed because of your stubborn refusal to get on the right track? If you can't acknowledge the realities of the present, how can Ontarians trust you with their future?

**Hon. Sandra Pupatello:** I'm really surprised at this question in particular because programs that our government has developed have benefited the people of Halton. I want to be able to tell them that their own local member supports the great initiative at Roxul, the insulation company in Halton which was able to access advanced manufacturing investment strategy funding to grow the

number of jobs in Halton. I want to be able to tell the people there who live in Halton and work in Oakville at Ford that they made an historic investment to build the Oakville Ford plant that benefits all of us across Ontario, and that their own local member would support the initiative with our auto strategy. Better yet, when we come out with yet another largest-of-its-kind investment program, the Next Generation of Jobs, I want to tell people of Halton that their own member supports that initiative for jobs for the people of Halton.

#### ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

**Mr. Howard Hampton:** A question to the Premier: Yesterday, I visited Cecilia Begg, a 58-year-old great-grandmother from Kitchenuhmaykoosib Inninuwug First Nation, who is in jail because the McGuinty government favours mining interests over aboriginal and treaty rights. Can the Premier tell us what public interest in Ontario is served by jailing, for six months, a 58-year-old great-grandmother?

**Hon. Dalton McGuinty:** To the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs.

**Hon. James J. Bradley:** You know that's not true, Howie.

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** The Minister of Transport.

**Hon. Michael Bryant:** With all due respect to the court, I'd say there's no public interest that is in fact met by incarceration under these circumstances. That's why the crown took the position that incarceration should not take place, and that's why the attorney has indicated support for any appeal upcoming, which we do anticipate. We think it's important that these matters are resolved at the negotiating table and not through litigation and certainly not through contempt incarceration orders.

**Mr. Howard Hampton:** The minister should know that the message that has been received by First Nations is that if they oppose mining exploration or mining development, then what very well may happen to them is that they may go to jail. It's happened to Cecilia Begg. It's happened to five other leaders from Kitchenuhmaykoosib Inninuwug. It's happened to the leadership of Ardoch First Nation. That's the message that's being received by First Nations. It seems to me that if the McGuinty government is serious about changing that message, then it's necessary for the McGuinty government to commit today to the immediate and unconditional release of Cecilia Begg and the other First Nation leaders who have been jailed because they oppose mining development in their territory. Is the McGuinty government prepared to do that—yes or no?

**Hon. Michael Bryant:** As one former Attorney General to another, you know very well that that can't be done. If it could be done, obviously I'd just pick up that key and I'd put it in the cell and open it up. But he knows very well that that's not how it works. I wish he would stop trying to tell the public otherwise because in fact, that former Attorney General knows very well that the



crown opposed incarceration, that the crown supports the appeal and that the government of Ontario does not support the incarceration of First Nations leaders, period. Stop telling people otherwise.

### YOUTH SERVICES

**Ms. Sophia Aggelonitis:** My question is for the Minister of Education. Minister, on Friday I had the pleasure of hosting the Premier in my riding to announce the expansion of our government's focus on youth program. I understand that Hamilton will receive \$765,000 under this initiative, with additional funding also being provided to high-needs neighbourhoods in Toronto and Ottawa. Would the minister kindly elaborate on what this program will mean to students and families in my community of Hamilton?

**Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne:** Thank you to the member for her question, and for her advocacy for her community in Hamilton and for the Greek community across Ontario.

The focus on youth program is a perfect example of how our government is working with school boards and community agencies to provide programming for kids in high-needs neighbourhoods. The focus on youth program allows school boards to open up schools in high-needs areas to provide programming for young kids in the schools during the summer, but also to provide jobs for youth in those communities.

We launched this program last year in Toronto. About 11,000 young people participated and some 380 students were hired as coaches, counsellors and staff. So we've expanded the program by 50% to \$6 million. Ottawa, Hamilton and Toronto are now all involved.

**Ms. Sophia Aggelonitis:** Thank you, Minister, for the information. However, as you know, not every child gets to go to summer camp, so this is certainly great news for the people of Hamilton, that we're able to assist in bringing these opportunities to children. I firmly believe that all our kids deserve to enjoy safe educational opportunities in the summer and during the school year.

The minister mentioned focus on youth as an example of working in partnership with our communities. I would like the minister to tell the House what other collaborative programs this government has introduced.

**Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne:** We know that, on average, Canadian kids between the ages of 10 and 16 spend about six hours a day in front of the TV, playing video games or using the computer. So what we want to do is find ways to help kids stay active and engaged. Programs like focus on youth, but also the youth opportunities strategy, summer jobs for youth and apprenticeship training, are all programs that provide opportunities for young people.

As well, we are tripling the amount of money that we are putting into school boards for community use of schools. We are going to be increasing that amount to \$66 million over the next few years, and that will allow community organizations to provide the kind of programming that kids need throughout the year, not just in

the summer. That's the kind of initiative—fostering collaboration among boards and community agencies—that the government needs to continue.

### SMOKING CESSATION

**Mr. Peter Shurman:** My question is for the Minister of Health Promotion. Back in 2004, the government promised to raise taxes on tobacco products and "use increased tobacco tax revenue to make smoking cessation medication available to all smokers trying to quit."

The McGuinty government did raise the taxes—they're really good at that—but expensive smoking cessation products only had the PST removed last year; and by special application only, implemented a program through community health centres and aboriginal health centres which is now fully subscribed, at approximately 38,000 persons receiving cessation products.

The government claims success. It says smoking is down 18.7% in its time in office. The estimate is not realistic when 30% of cigarettes are bought or sold illegally in Ontario. Will the minister tell the people of Ontario when this government's promise to cover the costs of smoking cessation products for all will be introduced?

**Hon. Margaret R. Best:** I thank the member opposite for his question. As we all know, smoking kills 13,000 Ontarians and costs our health care system \$1.7 billion every year. It is also the number one preventable cause of death in Ontario. When it comes to helping Ontarians break the cycle of tobacco addiction, our government's message is very simple: You can quit and we can help you.

That is why our 2008 budget proposed a permanent retail sales tax exemption for qualifying non-prescription nicotine replacement therapy products to help Ontarians quit smoking. Our government has committed close to \$15 million to cessation programs, including providing 53,000 Ontarians with access to counselling and nicotine replacement therapy, increased funding to the Canadian Cancer Society's smokers' helpline program—

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Thank you. Supplementary.

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**Mr. Peter Shurman:** Unequal enforcement of the Smoke-Free Ontario Act penalizes law-abiding businesses. Government lets them pay and it does nothing to punish those who defy the law. My Korean constituents, for example, many of whom are convenience store owners, complain legitimately of compliance costs while business dries up for them. Customers go to smoke shacks and First Nations vendors around Ontario, who appear to be immune from prosecution. A strategy on smoking reduction needs measurable results and that means a level playing field. Either the government lets convenience stores display and sell cigarettes and eliminates taxes, or it acts now to eliminate—

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** I ask the member how his supplementary is relating to the question on smoking cessation taxation and now convenience stores.



**Mr. Peter Shurman:** Let me put the question, Mr. Speaker. When can Ontarians expect the Minister of Health Promotion to announce a genuine smoking cessation program based on a uniform and enforced tobacco sales policy?

**Hon. Margaret R. Best:** I would refer the member opposite to page 64 of the 2008 Ontario budget. If he would listen—it's very important. I've been a new member and I observe that the members opposite don't listen very carefully. So please listen. We're "proposing a permanent retail sales tax exemption for qualifying non-prescription nicotine replacement therapies" in our efforts to continue to help Ontarians quit smoking.

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Stop the clock for a second. I just remind all members that we should try and use language in this chamber that isn't going to cause uproar. Making reference to opposition members isn't always conducive to trying to have good relationships in the chamber.

#### INTERNATIONAL TRADE

**Ms. Cheri DiNovo:** My question is for the Premier. Premier, why are you sending your Minister of Economic Development and Trade on a trade junket to China today while relatives of Tibetan Ontarians are being murdered by that Chinese government?

**Hon. Dalton McGuinty:** To the Minister of Economic Development and Trade.

**Hon. Sandra Pupatello:** I appreciate this opportunity to speak about much of the work that our ministry is doing related to economic development. I will say that we have opened 10 offices—international marketing centres—around the world. One of those, of course, has already opened in Shanghai, and we are opening our second office in Beijing. The purpose of this upcoming trip is to officially open this office and engage with those companies that do business with China.

Our purpose is economic development. We have a huge continent there that we want to engage in. Ontario's purpose is to do just that. We are very aware of other political issues that go on, and to that end we engage with our federal minister who is responsible for foreign affairs to be certain of what their role is in all of this. I can assure the member opposite that our purpose is economic development and the opportunity that exists for Ontario business.

**Ms. Cheri DiNovo:** My question is again for the Premier. Why did you keep this trip a secret, not only from every Ontarian but from every member of this House? We were not informed of this trip. Why do you continue to run roughshod over human rights—Ontarians' right to know and Tibetans' right to live?

**Hon. Sandra Pupatello:** I can tell you that there's nothing that goes on in our ministries that would be secret, in particular to members opposite. Any of you may know what our schedule would be for the balance of the year in terms of where we engage. If you look at the

map of the world you will see that we've opened 10 offices around the world. The very latest that we are adding is, in fact, in Beijing. It's a very important position for us to be in.

We are very aware of world events and world political events. That's why we take the time to speak with our federal minister, who is responsible for this. We are all part of this as the nation of Canada. We all have concerns for people who may be experiencing any kind of difficulty because of political behaviour. We're very concerned about that. I will tell you that our focus is economic development and we are certain that that will be the discussions we'll be having, in Shanghai as well as in Beijing.

#### LOW-INCOME ONTARIANS

**Mr. Charles Sousa:** My question is for the Minister of Community and Social Services. The city of Mississauga is a vibrant community that continues to grow each day. Yet, like other cities across Ontario, Mississauga residents are facing similar day-to-day challenges, whether it's working for a fair wage, providing for their families or ensuring that their children go to school well fed. Mississauga residents work hard to ensure their families can enjoy a good quality of life.

However, Minister, there has been some attention in recent weeks on the status of low-income citizens in our province and in my region. Social services funding is a concern, especially when it comes to improving the lives of the most vulnerable in our province. What has the government done to address these important issues, and what can we see in the near future in regard to improving the lives of all Ontarians?

**Hon. Madeleine Meilleur:** First, let me congratulate the citizens of Mississauga South, who have chosen such a passionate member and dedicated representative to work on their behalf.

Over the past four years in office, our government has made several important steps to improve the lives of all Ontarians. We've raised the minimum wage to \$8.75, and it's on its way up to \$10.25 by the year 2010. We have also raised social assistance four times, for a total of 9% since 2003. We've introduced a historic Ontario child benefit that will help more than 600,000 families and over 1.3 million children in Ontario when the program reaches its maturity in 2010.

It's not just the members on this side who are supportive. I just received a letter from a member from the other side who is very thankful about what we have done with—

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Thank you. Supplementary?

**Mr. Charles Sousa:** Minister, according to both PC leader John Tory and NDP leader Howard Hampton, this year's budget will do little to help the most vulnerable in Ontario. In fact, Mr. Tory suggests: "There are many, many low-income Ontarians today who will be receiving



nothing from this budget." Minister, can you please respond to these concerns from the opposition leaders?

**Hon. Madeleine Meilleur:** This party is not going to take any advice from the two opposite parties. They have nothing to be proud of when they were in power.

This is a government that is fully committed to assisting every family in our province. That's why the McGuinty government's third straight balanced budget includes a \$135-million investment over three years to provide free dental care to low-income families, \$32 million over three years to expand the student nutrition program, \$100 million in one-time funding to revitalize the province's aging social housing and a new \$10-million pilot program to help low-income Ontarians save for an education or start a business.

Human capital is Ontario's most valuable asset. Whenever this government has the opportunity to do so, we will always invest in the people of Ontario.

### TEACHERS' PENSIONS

**Mrs. Joyce Savoline:** My question is to the Minister of Education. What is this government's strategy to deal with the \$12.7-billion shortfall in the Ontario teachers' pension?

**Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne:** The McGuinty government has demonstrated over the last four and a half years, over and over again, our support for the teachers of Ontario. We value teachers; we know they're essential to making Ontario's publicly funded education system the envy of the world. That's why we've invested more than \$4 billion into our schools, which is a 33% increase in per pupil funding. That's why we were elected for a second term on a platform that continues to strengthen and improve our publicly funded schools.

I've been listening to my colleagues, including the leader of the opposition, who last week agreed with us that the teachers' pension fund is a very well run organization. We agree with that. We take the security of the plan and its costs very seriously. We have full confidence in the ability of the partners to address the valuation, as has been done in the past. The government's support for this plan and our teachers will continue.

**Mrs. Joyce Savoline:** My question is specifically about the \$12.7-billion shortfall. We know that the government is a partner in the plan. My question is, what will this bailout cost Ontario taxpayers?

1510

**Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne:** As I have already said, we have full confidence in the partners around the table to be able to deal with this valuation. Every time there's a valuation of the fund, there have to be issues that are resolved, and we are fully confident that the partners are going to be able to resolve this fund. That has been my position since this question was asked. It's the position of the government and we, unlike the party opposite, have confidence in teachers. We value work that teachers do. We believe that teachers are critical to the education

system, and we'll continue to work in partnership with them.

### WORKPLACE SAFETY

**Mr. Paul Miller:** My question is to the Minister of Labour. The labour minister stood up in this House and said clearly that the WSIB system is "in need of reform." Where has this government been for the last five years? Why hasn't this government stopped rewarding companies that are responsible for workers injured or killed on their watch?

**Hon. Brad Duguid:** Actually, I've never made that comment in this House, but did I make it on the weekend and I'm pleased to repeat it. Clearly, the experience rating system is in need of reform, and clearly, the WSIB agrees; that's why they're in the process right now of conducting a review on that system. They've made some immediate changes so that when there is a fatality in the workplace, that particular employer will not be entitled to a rebate. I think they're on the right track.

The fact is, our priority is making workplaces safer across this province. That's why we've invested heavily in enforcement: 200 additional health and safety inspectors are now out in workplaces across this province making workplaces healthier and safer. The result is very close to a 20% decrease in injuries. We're making progress when it comes to ensuring that we're reducing the amount of injuries in workplaces, and we'll continue to work on that basis.

**Mr. Paul Miller:** The workplace insurance agency has given tens of millions of dollars in rebates to companies that have been prosecuted by this government and found guilty of safety violations leading to deaths, amputations and other gruesome injuries. Experience rating is wrong. That is just one of the many things in the WSIB that needs to be fixed, including deeming and other situations, which the minister hasn't addressed. When did the minister first know about this, and why hasn't he done anything about it?

**Hon. Brad Duguid:** The WSIB announced earlier this month that they would be moving forward with this review. That's not news to anybody here in this Legislature. I'm confident that the WSIB will ensure that the incentive program for employers will be improved. I'm looking forward to seeing what their recommendations are.

We're out to try to change human behaviour and that takes an enforcement approach, which we're working very, very vigorously on with 200 additional health and safety inspectors. We're bringing down workplace injuries by close to 20%. By anybody's standards that's a dramatic decrease, but it also requires incentives, so we want to make sure that that incentive system works. That's why we're looking forward to seeing this review take place, and we're looking forward to seeing the results of the review so that we can have a full response to try to bring down workplace injuries. We're confident that we're going to get there.



## FIREARMS CONTROL

**Ms. Laurel C. Broten:** My question is to the Attorney General. The city of Toronto council has just this afternoon passed a resolution calling for a ban on handguns. We in this city and those of us who represent this city understand the importance of the call that they've made. My question to you, Attorney General, is, what is our position? Is our government going to support the city of Toronto in this important call?

**Hon. Christopher Bentley:** I know that for four years Premier McGuinty, my colleague Mike Bryant, when he was Attorney General, and this government have called on the federal government to bring in a national ban on handguns.

We welcome all to this cause. I know that for four years Mayor Miller, in particular, has spoken on a number of occasions on this very issue, and I welcome the motion of today.

A ban on handguns is an essential part of our strategy to reduce gun violence everywhere: increased border security; the right laws, such as mandatory minimums and reverse-onus bail; more police officers on the street; and community investment.

The people of Ontario support this. It is now time for the federal government to listen to the people of Ontario and support a national ban on handguns.

**Ms. Laurel C. Broten:** I know that people right across the city will be proud and pleased to hear that two levels of government are willing to work together, because the fact of the matter remains that our communities and our families simply want to be safe. They really don't care what level of government is taking action, but they want to see a unified front and they want to understand that those who represent them, whether they're at the federal, the provincial or the municipal level, are working to make their communities safer.

What I would ask the Attorney General to do is to provide details with respect to other steps that our government is willing to take in looking for partners to work with as we work to continue to make the city of Toronto a safer place.

**Hon. Christopher Bentley:** To the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services.

**Hon. Rick Bartolucci:** I thank the member for the question. Listen, we have to do everything possible to ensure that we get rid of handguns on the streets of Ontario. We call, as the city of Toronto has called, on the federal government to ban handguns. It's time the federal government understands that the will of Ontarians is to ban handguns. So we ask the federal government to support the city of Toronto's motion and get these handguns off the streets of Ontario.

## INTERNATIONAL TRADE

**Mr. Robert W. Runciman:** My question is to the Minister of Economic Development and Trade, and it's a follow-up to an earlier question, with a bit of a different

slant, about her upcoming travels. I gather today that she's departing for China to officially open a trade office. I wonder if she could tell us the number of people who will be travelling with her, the cost to the taxpayers and if any family members will be joining her.

**Hon. Sandra Pupatello:** I'd be happy to provide you with that information. I do have one person from my office travelling; I also have one of my assistant deputy ministers travelling with me. The balance of the list I will provide for you. I don't have it at this moment, but I'll send it over to you.

**Mr. Robert W. Runciman:** I guess the point being made here is that the House did not sit for three months—

*Interjection.*

**Mr. Robert W. Runciman:** Mr. Speaker, that member is not in his seat and he's heckling. I hope you'll bring him to order.

The point is, the House was not sitting for an extended period of time. We know the job situation in Ontario can be described as a crisis situation. We have this minister now saying that she's going to leave the country on an expensive jaunt, and who knows what purpose or what end can be accomplished by her travelling the world.

I again ask her what she hopes to accomplish by being in Beijing to cut a ribbon. Why couldn't Mr. Kwinter be doing that on behalf of the government of Ontario?

**Hon. Sandra Pupatello:** I appreciate your comments about the chair of the Ontario's Investment and Trade Advisory Council, because you are right on the money: Our new chair of this council is doing some tremendous work, not just for you and me, representing us around the globe, but also for the people of Ontario, where it actually matters. They want to see outcomes from this kind of travel.

For my own part, I'm very happy to report to the House, and always have, what the details of the expense may be. I remember very well sitting on that bench and having to ferret out mounds and mounds of paper just because we would ask a question about expenses. I'd be happy to pass it over to you and save you the trouble of having to go fishing, because I'm very open about what it is that we do. It certainly does relate to business for Ontario companies. We have businesses in Ontario that want to do business in China. Many of the companies there are state-run companies, and that's why our involvement is so essential.

## HOME CARE

**M<sup>me</sup> France Gélinas:** Ma question est pour le ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée. Ontarians are frustrated by the government's secretive, behind-the-scenes review of home care competitive bidding and the lack of public input. Led by CUPE, a coalition of people interested in home care have been holding rallies across the province asking for public consultation on the new home care model. Does the minister agree to hold public consultations on home care?

1520

**Hon. George Smitherman:** I appreciate very much that the member actually acknowledged that a reasonably select number of people from CUPE have been showing up at offices and expressing this. For my part, I've had the privilege so far of having between six and eight meetings in my office, speaking to representatives of the various organizations with an interest in the delivery of home care. On this point, our interest is very clear: We wish to enhance the capacity of the health care system in Ontario to deliver more home care, and to do so in a fashion which sustains as well as possible the relationship between the provider and the client receiving the care in their own home.

To that end, I will acknowledge that we have some policy work under way. As I've had the opportunity to complete that and to offer that as advice to my government, I'll be in a much better position to share that with the members in this Legislature and throughout Ontario.

**M<sup>me</sup> France Gélinas:** I'm glad the minister has had opportunities to hold eight meetings with groups of his choosing, but those are not public meetings. Studies have shown that since competition was introduced a decade ago, the quality of home care has suffered, working conditions have diminished and costs have increased as for-profit providers have taken over a majority of home care, and that's province-wide.

Regular Ontarians are asking you to consult with them before you introduce the new home care model so that they have a say into how home care services are going to be delivered to them and their loved ones in their community. Minister, will you agree to hold public consultations so that regular Ontarians can be heard?

**Hon. George Smitherman:** It does seem that the honourable member and I have some disagreement about what a regular Ontarian is. She did say in her first answer that to her, a regular Ontarian is the real leader of her party, Sid Ryan. For me, my obligation is different. It is to maximize the opportunity to be aware of information that comes from a variety of groups. I want to encourage anyone tuning in that, if they have a strong desire of letting me or other members of the Legislature know about their views with respect to the way home care should be delivered, we would welcome that.

I do think it's noteworthy that there are a variety of different organizations that represent the providers, those on the for-profit side and those on the not-for-profit side, and I've taken the opportunity to meet with all of them and be engaged in regular dialogue with them. I'll continue that as I go down the path towards finding the absolute, best solutions.

Our commitment to health care can't be questioned. Almost half of every dollar that we spend is on the delivery of this important public service, and the dedication was very well reflected in our last budget as well.

#### DURHAM REGIONAL COUNCIL

**Mr. Joe Dickson:** My question is for the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. I've been involved in

municipal politics in Ajax for over 30 years before being elected to this office last October. I have seen Ajax grow from a smaller community into a hub of activity in Durham region. From the thriving business community to the old neighbourhoods, Ajax is a place I've called home most of my life.

With the growth of Ajax comes the need to reform Durham regional council. Ajax has only three representatives for 100,000 people. In comparison, Oshawa has fewer than 150,000 people but has eight representatives on Durham council. Minister, I want to tell you that I support Mayor Parish's call for a reform representation on regional council. Would the minister please tell me what he can do to help.

**Hon. Jim Watson:** I want to thank the member from Ajax-Pickering for his service at the municipal level. He understands some of the important work they're doing at both Ajax council and Durham regional council. I can confirm that Mayor Parish has sent me a letter, and I will be responding to tell him that the best solution is a local solution. If regional council brings forward a resolution from their council calling for a different makeup of the number of members of council from Ajax or other communities, I'll certainly take a very serious look at that.

Premier McGuinty has instilled in me and all of us in our government to make sure that we try, as best as possible, to find local solutions at the local level. I know the honourable member is dedicated to ensuring that Ajax has its fair share. I look forward to any resolution from the town of Ajax. I thank the honourable member because, together with Wayne Arthurs and Joe Dickson, Durham region is finally well represented right here in Queen's Park.

#### PETITIONS

##### LORD'S PRAYER

**Mr. Gerry Martiniuk:** I have a petition to the Parliament of Ontario provided to me by Temple Baptist Church and St. Peter's Evangelical Lutheran Church.

"Whereas Premier Dalton McGuinty has called on the Ontario Legislature to consider removing the Lord's Prayer from its daily proceedings; and

"Whereas the Lord's Prayer has been an integral part of our parliamentary heritage that was first established in 1793 under Lieutenant Governor John Graves Simcoe; and

"Whereas the Lord's Prayer is today a significant part of the religious heritage of millions of Ontarians of culturally diverse backgrounds;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario to continue its long-standing practice of using the Lord's Prayer as part of its daily proceedings."

As I agree with the petition, I affix my name thereto.



## HIGHWAY 144

**M<sup>me</sup> France Gélinas:** I have a petition here from the people of my riding that is over 125 pages long and represents over 1,200 people from my riding.

"Whereas the section of Highway 144 North in the city of greater Sudbury, also known as Levack Hill, has become extremely dangerous due to large potholes, cracked pavement and more patchwork than pavement. The potholes are regularly filled but, due to the heavy volume of traffic, the patching does not stay intact. This section of the highway has a lot of traffic due to the mining industry operations of Xstrata, Vale Inco and FNX. This part of the highway has three lanes of deteriorated pavement; that constitutes a public safety hazard.

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To have this part of Highway 144 repaired and resurfaced."

There aren't that many people who live in Cartier Levack and Onaping. Every single driver has signed this petition. I support it and I affix my name to it.

## EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

**Mr. Bill Mauro:** I have a petition entitled "Fairness for Ontario Workers: Employment Insurance," addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. It reads as follows:

"Whereas the federal government's employment insurance surplus now stands at \$54 billion; and

"Whereas over 75% of Ontario's unemployed are not eligible for employment insurance because of Ottawa's unfair eligibility rules; and

"Whereas an Ontario worker has to work more weeks to qualify and receives fewer weeks of benefits than other Canadian unemployed workers; and

"Whereas the average Ontario unemployed worker gets \$4,000 less in EI benefits than unemployed workers in other provinces and thus not qualifying for many retraining programs;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to press the federal government to reform the employment insurance program and to end the discrimination and unfairness towards Ontario's unemployed workers."

I support this and affix my signature, brought to the table by Bethany.

## LORD'S PRAYER

**Mr. Bill Murdoch:** I have a petition sent to me by Dorothy Meek from Markdale, who's very concerned. It's to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the current Liberal government is proposing to eliminate the Lord's Prayer from daily proceedings in the Ontario Legislature;...

"Therefore we, the undersigned, ask the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to preserve the daily recitation of the Lord's Prayer by the Speaker in the Legislature."

I have signed this.

## HOME CARE

**Mr. Paul Miller:** I'm presenting a petition today from the SEIU union and the people of Chatham-Blenheim-Kent county.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ontario government has continued the practice of competitive bidding for home care services; and

"Whereas the competitive bidding process has increased the privatization of Ontario's health care delivery, in direct violation of the Commitment to the Future of Medicare Act, 2004; and

"Whereas competitive bidding for home care services has decreased both the continuity and quality of care available to home care clients; and

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"Whereas home care workers do not enjoy the same employment rights, such as successor rights, as all other Ontario workers have, which deprives them of termination rights, seniority rights and the right to move with their work when their employer agency loses a contract;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"We call on the government of Ontario:

"(1) to immediately stop the competitive bidding for home care services so home care clients can receive the continuity and quality of care they deserve; and

"(2) to extend successor rights under the Labour Relations Act to home care workers to ensure the home care sector is able to retain a workforce that is responsive to clients' needs."

I support this petition and hereby sign my name to it.

## HOSPITAL FUNDING

**Mr. Kuldip Kular:** "Petition to the Ontario Legislative Assembly:

"Western Mississauga ambulatory surgery centre:

"Whereas wait times for access to surgical procedures in the western GTA area served by the Mississauga Halton LHIN are growing despite the vigorous capital project activity at the hospitals within the Mississauga Halton LHIN boundaries; and

"Whereas 'day surgery' procedures could be performed in an off-site facility, thus greatly increasing the ability of surgeons to perform more procedures, alleviating wait times for patients, and freeing up operating theatre space in hospitals for more complex procedures that may require post-operative intensive care unit support and a longer length of stay in hospital;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care allocate funds in its 2008-09 capital budget to begin planning and construction of an ambulatory surgery centre located in western Mississauga to serve the Mississauga-Halton area and enable greater access to 'day surgery' procedures that comprise about four fifths of all surgical procedures performed."

I agree with the petitioners and I have put my signature on it as well.

### LORD'S PRAYER

**Mr. John O'Toole:** I am pleased to present a petition from the congregation at the Trulls Road Free Methodist Church in my riding of Durham. It reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the current Liberal government is proposing to eliminate the Lord's Prayer from its" rightful "place at the beginning of daily proceedings in the Legislature; and

"Whereas the recitation of the Lord's Prayer has opened the Legislature every day since the 19th century; and

"Whereas the Lord's Prayer's message of forgiveness and the avoidance of evil is universal to the human condition: It is a valuable guide and lesson for a chamber that is too often an arena of conflict; and

"Whereas recognizing the diversity of the people of Ontario should be an inclusive process, not one which excludes traditions such as the Lord's Prayer;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, ask the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to preserve the daily recitation of the Lord's Prayer by the Speaker in the Legislature."

I am pleased to sign this on their behalf and present it to one of the new pages, Rheanna.

### HOME CARE

**M<sup>me</sup> France Gélinas:** I have a petition from SEIU, from the people of Thunder Bay and Terrace Bay.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ontario government has continued the practice of competitive bidding for home care services; and

"Whereas the competitive bidding process has increased the privatization of Ontario's health care delivery, in direct violation of the Commitment to the Future of Medicare Act, 2004; and

"Whereas competitive bidding for home care services has decreased both the continuity and quality of care available to home care clients; and

"Whereas home care workers do not enjoy the same employment rights, such as successor rights, as all other Ontario workers have, which deprives them of termination rights, seniority rights and the right to move with their work when their employer agency loses a contract;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"We call on the government of Ontario:

"(1) to immediately stop the competitive bidding for home care services so home care clients can receive the continuity and quality of care they deserve; and

"(2) to extend successor rights under the Labour Relations Act to home care workers to ensure the home care sector is able to retain a workforce that is responsive to clients' needs."

I support this petition and will affix my name to it.

### POPE JOHN PAUL II

**Mr. Bob Delaney:** I'm pleased to support my colleagues from Parry Sound-Muskoka and Newmarket-Aurora with this petition to the Parliament of Ontario, and I thank Adam Medon of Huntsville for having signed it, filled it in and sent it to us. It reads as follows:

"Whereas the legacy of Pope John Paul II reflects his lifelong commitment to international understanding, peace and the defence of equality and human rights;

"Whereas his legacy has an all-embracing meaning that is particularly relevant to Canada's multi-faith and multicultural traditions;

"Whereas, as one of the great spiritual leaders of contemporary times, Pope John Paul II visited Ontario during his pontificate of more than 25 years and, on his visits, was enthusiastically greeted by Ontario's diverse religious and cultural communities;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario to grant speedy passage into law of the private member's bill by Oak Ridges MPP Frank Klees entitled An Act to proclaim Pope John Paul II Day."

I'm pleased to sign this petition and to ask page Michael to carry it for me.

### HOSPITAL FUNDING

**Mr. Norm Miller:** I'm pleased to present a petition supporting the member for Mississauga-Streetsville.

"Petition to the Ontario Legislative Assembly:

"Western Mississauga ambulatory surgery centre:

"Whereas wait times for access to surgical procedures in the western GTA area served by the Mississauga Halton LHIN are growing despite the vigorous capital project activity at the hospitals within the Mississauga Halton LHIN boundaries; and

"Whereas 'day surgery' procedures could be performed in an off-site facility, thus greatly increasing the ability of surgeons to perform more procedures, alleviating wait times for patients, and freeing up operating theatre space in hospitals for more complex procedures that may require post-operative intensive care unit support and a longer length of stay in hospital;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care allocate funds in its 2008-09 capital budget to begin planning and construction of an ambulatory surgery centre located in western Mississauga to serve the Mississauga-Halton area and enable greater access to



'day surgery' procedures that comprise about four fifths of all surgical procedures performed."

I support this petition.

#### DAVID DUNLAP OBSERVATORY

**Mr. Reza Moridi:** I present to you today about 100 signatures which were presented to me during the rally held at Queen's Park on January 16, 2008.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the David Dunlap Observatory in Richmond Hill is of historical and heritage significance;

"Whereas the land was donated in trust by the Dunlap family to the University of Toronto in 1935, and the pre-Confederation farmhouse is still standing;

"Whereas the observatory, featuring the largest optical telescope in Canada, has been the site of" great "scientific discoveries; it has been a place of learning not only for students of the University of Toronto, but for the general public as well;

"Whereas the observatory has been recently declared by the University of Toronto as 'surplus' to its academic needs, and subject to sale for development;

"Whereas the observatory sits in an incredibly unique and beautiful 180 acres of green space, the largest such space in the town of Richmond Hill, with trees, birds, animals, plants, insects and butterflies in the middle of a rapidly urbanized area;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to support the protection of this property of such historical, scientific and natural significance" from being used as commercial development.

I'll sign this petition.

#### LORD'S PRAYER

**Mrs. Julia Munro:** "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the current Liberal government is proposing to eliminate the Lord's Prayer from daily proceedings in the Ontario Legislature; and

"Whereas the recitation of the Lord's Prayer has opened the Legislature every day since the 19th century; and

"Whereas the Lord's Prayer's message is one of forgiveness, of providing for those in need of their 'daily bread' and of preserving us from the evils that we may fall into; it is a valuable guide and lesson for a chamber that is too often an arena for conflict; and

"Whereas recognizing the diversity of the people of Ontario should be an inclusive process, not one which excludes traditions such as the Lord's Prayer;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, ask the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to preserve the daily recitation of the Lord's Prayer by the Speaker in the Legislature."

I am in agreement, affix my signature and give this to page Prakash.

#### HOSPITAL FUNDING

**Mr. Bob Delaney:** I have a petition to the Ontario Legislative Assembly submitted to me by a number of homeowners from Mississauga, Hornby and Milton. It reads as follows:

"Whereas wait times for access to surgical procedures in the western GTA area served by the Mississauga Halton LHIN are growing despite the vigorous capital project activity at the hospitals within the Mississauga Halton LHIN boundaries; and

"Whereas 'day surgery' procedures could be performed in an off-site facility, thus greatly increasing the ability of surgeons to perform more procedures, alleviating wait times for patients, and freeing up operating theatre space in hospitals for more complex procedures that may require post-operative intensive care unit support and a longer length of stay in hospital;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care allocate funds in its 2008-09 capital budget to begin planning and construction of an ambulatory surgery centre located in western Mississauga to serve the Mississauga-Halton area and enable greater access to 'day surgery' procedures that comprise about four fifths of all surgical procedures performed."

I'm pleased to sign and to support this petition, and to ask page Thomas to carry it, and to welcome him to the Legislature.

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#### ORDERS OF THE DAY

##### BUDGET MEASURES AND INTERIM APPROPRIATION ACT, 2008

##### LOI DE 2008 SUR LES MESURES BUDGÉTAIRES ET L'AFFECTATION ANTICIPÉE DE CRÉDITS

Mr. Bryant, on behalf of Mr. Duncan, moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 44, An Act respecting Budget measures, interim appropriations and other matters / Projet de loi 44, Loi concernant les mesures budgétaires, l'affectation anticipée de crédits et d'autres questions.

**Hon. Michael Bryant:** I'm going to be splitting my time with the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Finance. I think it's probably best to let him just go ahead.

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier):** The government House leader has moved second reading of Bill 44. We're going to let the parliamentary assistant just go ahead.

**Mr. Wayne Arthurs:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister as well. As you know, the business of this place is such that often you have to



multi-task and be in two places at once. I was a moment or so arriving back in my seat from another meeting.

It's a particular pleasure of mine today to rise and speak about the Ontario budget. We began our second mandate with a very strong statement this past fall when we introduced the Ontario Economic Outlook and Fiscal Review.

The Ontario budget 2008 continues to implement our economic plan with a broad approach to stimulate investment and address the challenges faced by many sectors.

Ontario's economy has been strong and resilient in recent years. We've had higher growth than forecasted, healthier consumer and business spending and strong job numbers, all of this despite a challenging external environment, including a weakening US economy, higher oil prices and a stronger Canadian dollar.

Our government's prudent approach to managing the province's finances continues to produce very positive results. We're on track to produce six consecutive balanced budgets, and our accumulated deficit-to-GDP ratio is forecast to improve to 16.2% by 2010-11 from 25.2% in 2003-04.

The McGuinty government is paying down debt, balancing the budget and investing in this province to build a better future for all Ontarians. We have the right plan to lead this province in good times and in difficult times. Our plan balances prudent financial management with vital investments that build on the strengths of this province, because we know that there isn't one simple answer to attract growth and investment to this province. It takes a comprehensive approach. Our quality of life is affected by many challenges and many opportunities.

The people of this province agree. The government has invested, and continues to invest, in tax cuts for business. However, simply lowering taxes is not enough to ensure that an economy can compete in a global marketplace.

According to a 2006 competitiveness study by KPMG, the combined total of all taxes imposed by all levels of government represents only 3% to 13% of location-sensitive costs. As KPMG notes, selecting the best site for a business operation requires balanced consideration of many factors, including business costs, business environment, personnel costs and quality-of-life issues.

That's why our government has a five-point plan that factors in all of these considerations, a plan that will attract investment and help grow the Ontario economy. Our plan invests in skills and knowledge, accelerates our investment in infrastructure, supports innovation, lowers business costs and strengthens key partnerships to maximize our future potential.

Attracting investment now and into the future requires an environment that supports business and people in all areas of their lives. We must continue to build upon the strengths that we have, because businesses are run by people, and our citizens want to live in a modern, well-run province. We want solid infrastructure, good public health care and quality education. Ontarians want a government that supports businesses and people.

We believe the key to success is building on the strengths of this province and supporting an environment where new expertise can grow. Our skilled and highly educated workforce is a key economic advantage. It enhances our position as a choice for global investment. Many high-growth industries, such as information technology, construction, energy and health care, face a shortage of skills as we speak today. I've been told that the "innovation triangle," the area in and around the Kitchener-Waterloo area, is in need of some 1,800 computer specialists. The challenge is to ensure that workers with the right skills are available when growing industries need them.

We saw this challenge as an opportunity to retrain unemployed workers to get high-paying jobs in expanding areas of our economy and to encourage young people to gain the skills our province will need in the years ahead. Our new \$1.5-billion skills-to-jobs action plan invests in infrastructure. It invests in student aid and supports new skills for new careers. The McGuinty government's goal is to have the greatest number of people possible working in the jobs that will strengthen Ontario's competitive advantage. This means ensuring all Ontarians have the opportunities and tools they need to succeed. Skills training programs will give Ontario's workforce the knowledge, the skills and the flexibility to compete with the world's best.

Our second-career strategy will help 20,000 unemployed workers who commit to a long-term training plan to make the transition to new careers and good jobs in areas of the economy that are undergoing growth.

We will expand the number of new apprentices. Our goal is to reach 32,500 registrants annually, an increase of 25% by 2011-12.

Because we know how important it is to be at the forefront of technology, the McGuinty government will invest \$45 million over three years to buy state-of-the-art equipment essential for technical training.

An estimated 70% of new jobs in the next decade will require post-secondary education. That's up from just 60% in the last 10 years. To further assist students, our government will help expand post-secondary student aid and programs. We're providing post-secondary grants to students with a new textbook and technology grant, and we'll help to lower the cost for every full-time college and university student.

To address the needs of students from rural and remote areas, we're offering a distance grant to help with transportation-related costs.

The McGuinty government knows how important it is to ensure everyone has opportunity and the assistance they need to achieve their goals. To help more students achieve, we're enhancing our successful Pathways to Education program and increasing the number of at-risk youth finishing high school and proceeding to post-secondary education or directly into the workforce.

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We realize how important modern infrastructure is to attract new students and provide the best possible facilities in which they can learn. The McGuinty government



is investing \$970 million over three years to build and repair facilities and to keep our colleges and universities at the cutting edge. We'll invest in the maintenance and renewal of university facilities and invest in new and expanded skills training centres, facilities and equipment.

The McGuinty government is making these strategic investments to keep Ontario competitive in this changing economy. Our five-point plan recognizes that we must be competitive in many areas and not focused on one area alone. We also acknowledge the importance of a competitive tax system and investing in business and in industry.

In fact, just three short months ago, we proposed a package of business tax relief worth \$1.1 billion over three years. In this budget, we're proposing a further \$750 million in business tax relief over four years, starting in 2007-08. We're proposing to eliminate the capital tax retroactive to January 1, 2007, for manufacturing and resource firms. This will entitle them to an additional \$190 million in rebates. The government proposes to extend the acceleration of the capital cost allowance for manufacturing and processing machinery and equipment investments made before 2012. This will save businesses some \$433 million over three years and encourage Ontario manufacturers, and forest companies in particular, to invest in new equipment. To help northern businesses, the business education tax rate cuts will be accelerated in the north, a total savings of some \$70 million during the next three years.

The McGuinty government recognizes that supporting business in Ontario will encourage growth and innovation. To encourage innovation, we're proposing a 10-year Ontario income tax exemption for new corporations that commercialize intellectual property developed by qualifying Canadian universities, colleges or research institutes. Our income tax exemption will help educational and research institutes create meaningful public-private partnerships. Small and medium-sized corporations employ some 60% of the private sector employees in Ontario. We'll continue to support an environment where they can flourish and grow Ontario's economy.

In this budget, the government is also proposing to enhance the Ontario innovation tax credit, which provides a 10% refundable tax credit to small and medium-sized corporations performing eligible scientific research and experimental development here in Ontario.

The government will also do its part to move with the times. It is our goal to lead all Canadian jurisdictions in efforts to measure and reduce regulatory burden. To help all businesses, the government will modernize Ontario's regulations, starting with an aggressive cap-and-trade initiative for government regulations so that when new regulations are enacted, others will be eliminated.

The McGuinty government is committed to making investments in key economic sectors.

We're helping Ontario's entertainment and creative cluster, a cornerstone of the province's new innovative economy. Ontario is home to some of North America's top entertainment and creative industries. Between 1999

and 2007, this sector alone created more than 80,000 net new jobs. To further help this growing sector, we're proposing to enhance the Ontario interactive digital media tax credit. We'll increase our funding for the festival attraction and support program.

The McGuinty government is also striving to make the tax system fairer and simpler for all Ontarians. We've asked the Ontario Ombudsman to look into property tax assessment in our province and provide recommendations to improve the system. One of the recommendations was to reverse the onus of proof on property assessment appeals. The government will introduce legislation that, if passed, would place the onus of proof on the Municipal Property Assessment Corp. to prove the accuracy of property assessments that are appealed to the Ontario Assessment Review Board. We also intend to implement changes to the appeal system designed to create a more streamlined and transparent appeal system. It would make the request-for-reconsideration program the first stage of appeal for property owners. The program is free of charge and encourages the sharing of information between MPAC and the property owner, and provides the owner the opportunity to resolve concerns directly with MPAC in a more informal setting. These and other improvements will help provide a more effective and fair system for Ontario property taxpayers.

The McGuinty government has consistently supported innovation in Ontario. We continue to do this in this budget, with nearly \$300 million in new innovation initiatives. Our government supports a culture of innovation through investments that encourage the start-up and growth of innovative firms.

We'll also provide our young people with the best skills and the best equipment to help them develop the ground-breaking ideas of tomorrow. The government is moving forward with our Next Generation of Jobs Fund, a five-year, \$1.15-billion strategy to help innovative companies keep pace with changes in the global economy and secure new knowledge-based jobs and investments in Ontario. The McGuinty government is investing \$250 million in the Ontario research fund for investment in research infrastructure at Ontario institutions.

To help our next generation of innovators, we're making investments in our post-secondary institutions. The University of Western Ontario will receive support for interdisciplinary research into chemicals and fuels made from agricultural resources. A new centre for research and innovation in the bioeconomy will be located in Thunder Bay to undertake frontier research in the next generation of higher-value forestry products. We're providing funding to the University of Guelph to support research, animal health and the Ontario Veterinary College. The Vineland Research and Innovation Centre will benefit from our continuing investment yet again this year.

These initiatives are so important because our young people are the future of this province, and the McGuinty government is determined to help them become the best-educated and most skilled workforce in this global market.



To encourage an innovative economy, we need to attract and keep the best and the brightest. Supporting strong communities and improving the quality of life for Ontarians are key to making our province a first choice for people and investment. The McGuinty government's investments in Ontario's infrastructure will build and improve our communities and attract businesses. Our initiatives will create jobs and will support a more productive, competitive and greener economy.

Our government has an ambitious infrastructure plan. We have begun our \$17.5-billion Move Ontario rapid transit action plan to expand public transit throughout the Golden Horseshoe, and we're making progress on our ReNew Ontario plan to improve our public infrastructure, create jobs and boost investment in Ontario.

In this budget, the McGuinty government is investing \$750 million, beginning in this fiscal year, to build new schools and repair school facilities.

Municipal roads and bridges are the backbone of Ontario's transportation network as they connect communities and provide access to economic opportunities. Our 2008 budget includes an additional \$1 billion to invest in municipal infrastructure. We're investing \$400 million in roads and bridges to help communities outside of Toronto. Our government is expanding public transit to reduce traffic congestion and improve air quality. The greater Toronto area and Hamilton will receive \$497 million in additional funding for public transit initiatives. They'll also benefit from improvements to the GO Transit infrastructure, including improvements at Union Station. We're also expanding GO Transit's bus rapid transit system to provide commuters in the Golden Horseshoe with more access to reliable public transit.

As you know, international trade is integral to Ontario's and Canada's economic prosperity. We are committed to ensuring efficient and uninterrupted trade with our partners, the United States, through Ontario's borders, its gateways and its trade corridors. The province is working closely with the federal government and our US partners on a strategy to develop a new border crossing and associated infrastructure at the crucial Windsor-Detroit gateway.

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We're also continuing to invest in our publicly funded health care system because it too is a competitive advantage. The government's plan is improving access, shortening wait times, promoting wellness, preventing illness and modernizing the health infrastructure. Our investments will provide more health care professionals, including \$500 million over three years to move towards our goal of 9,000 more nurses by 2011-12. We'll create 50 more family health teams in the same period and expand nurse practitioner-led clinics by providing \$38 million for that purpose over three years. The McGuinty government will continue to modernize our health infrastructure and proceed with a number of projects in 2008, including investments in e-health systems such as diagnostic imaging, drug and lab information, and a diabetes registry.

Our government continues to promote and support new business investment through partnerships with industry, other levels of government, other jurisdictions and our aboriginal peoples. These investments will create and protect jobs and forge new strategic partnerships. The McGuinty government will create Investment Ontario, Inc. to respond to intensifying global competition for new business investments and jobs. Investment Ontario, which is an independent agency, will provide businesses with fast and effective access to development services and the assistance they require. It will help our government become more strategic in targeting markets and sectors on which to focus investments and trade activities and improve Ontario's international recognition.

On March 26, Minister Duncan announced a new Centre of Excellence for Education in Financial Services. It will be the first of its kind in Ontario. About 350,000 people are employed in Ontario's financial sector, 213,000 of them in the Toronto area. Since 2003, employment in Ontario's financial services sector has increased by 12%. This new centre will build on this expertise by promoting innovation in technology, attracting more international students to Toronto and facilitating the export of Ontario financial educational services. It will work to maintain and support the scope and quality of our financial sector and drive economic success and competitiveness, and will help secure our advantage by creating a global hub for financial services education and training. This is the kind of strength our government is recognizing and supporting through these key investments.

The McGuinty government is building stronger relationships as well with the aboriginal peoples of our province. We're supporting Ontario's aboriginal peoples by providing \$600 million annually for initiatives to improve their quality of life. The Akwe:go program will receive an additional \$4 million to provide at-risk urban aboriginal children and their families with culturally relevant and community-based supports.

The government will invest \$1.5 million, to be matched by the Heart and Stroke Foundation of Ontario, to establish a research chair in aboriginal and rural health at the Northern Ontario School of Medicine. The Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs will continue to strengthen our partnerships in key areas.

We're helping students get international experience by starting a Global Edge program. Ontario students between the ages of 19 and 29 will benefit from the opportunities and challenges of conducting international business. To increase opportunities for Ontario business, we're investing in partnerships that will open global markets and encourage investment here in Ontario. We're also providing \$5 million to the Ontario Chamber of Commerce for a global expansion program to help companies increase their access to export markets.

The government recognizes how important farming is to both our economy and the environment. To that end, the McGuinty government is making a \$56-million investment over four years in our Pick Ontario Freshness



strategy and the Ontario farmers' market initiative to encourage Ontarians to buy locally.

Tourism in Ontario has suffered in the past few years from a number of external challenges. We're going to invest a further \$8 million over two years to conduct research on new tourism markets and inform Ontario's tourism strategy.

All of these initiatives will help move Ontario toward a more innovative, globally-competitive economy and help make our province better now and into the future.

In our fall economic statement, we began to implement our five-point economic plan. We continued with our recent budget. The plan will strengthen long-term productivity while stimulating growth in our economy.

We're making investments in people so that Ontario can compete. Our approach is a balanced one that is both prudent and pragmatic. The McGuinty government is making the investments today in training and infrastructure to create jobs now and improve productivity in the future.

Our innovation initiatives will ensure that Ontario continues to be on the cutting edge of new technology. They will move us toward a greener, more sustainable economy.

The choice to make investments in an economy is based on a broad range of factors including education, health care and taxes. Our plan strikes the right balance and strengthens those competitive advantages that make Ontario the best place in Canada to live, work and invest.

The resilience of our economy will continue into the future because of the people of Ontario—their skills, innovation and belief that everyone should have opportunity.

This plan affirms our belief that our province is only prosperous when quality public services are properly and adequately funded.

Ontarians have the tools and the will to make our province a great place for all of us, and that's what we intend to do.

The McGuinty government has the plan to build a stronger, better Ontario for our future, one that is prosperous and inclusive, sustainable and competitive, and where we constantly move forward and strive to achieve the Ontario we all want and deserve.

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier):** Questions and comments?

**Mr. Norm Miller:** I'm very pleased to respond to the member from Pickering–Scarborough East in his opening debate on the budget bill.

I see this budget as being anything but prudent. I see it as being a typical tax-and-spend Liberal budget. Some \$96.7 billion is the value of this budget—a tremendous increase from when this government came into power a few short years ago.

We know that there are economic storm clouds on the horizon. This government in the past year had an extra \$5 billion in extra revenue. Instead of saving that for a rainy day, which you'd think would be the prudent thing to

do—that seems to be their favourite word. Instead of saving it or keeping it for a rainy day, they blew it out the door.

They spent it in a way that is not necessarily fair. I look at the town of Gravenhurst, which has now applied four times for the MIII program or to others of various names and four times been turned down for this lottery style of project. They're applying for a very worthwhile project for road work. They spent a lot of money on the application and are turned down time after time.

What I would say that municipalities need is sustainable funding that they can depend and plan on, and not have to spend a lot of money to apply for and then get turned down. Sure, those that receive the money are happy, but more get turned down than actually receive it.

It's a question of priorities, too. The Burk's Falls Health Centre in my riding just closed its after-hours urgent care services at the end of March because they couldn't get \$107,000. This government had \$5 billion extra in the past year and yet they didn't have \$107,000 for the Burk's Falls Health Centre after-hours urgent care service.

**Mr. Michael Prue:** It's my privilege and pleasure to respond to the member from—that's changed now—

*Interjection.*

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**Mr. Michael Prue:** Pickering–Scarborough East. Okay. I'll learn all these new titles in short order.

Mr. Speaker, I listened intently. Of course, as the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Finance, he has to, and did, wax eloquent on what he thinks his government is doing correctly. But I would suggest, notwithstanding what was said, that what was not said was far more important.

Very little was said or talked about on the job losses in the province of Ontario. Very little or nothing was talked about on the anti-poverty measures or their sufficiency. Very little was talked about, and nothing, I believe, was said, either in the budget or in the member's speech, on daycare and the advancing of daycare in Ontario. Very little or nothing was talked about on long-term care or whether what has been put forward is adequate. Very little or nothing was talked about on property tax reform, although I am pleased to say he did mention the word "impact," at least in one or two sentences. There was nothing about uploading the download that municipalities have asked for in his speech. There was very little or nothing about the environment, or about post-secondary education and the growing tax burden that students are facing.

So in all, although he was there to give the government position, that which was not contained within his speech was far more telling, to my mind, than that which was contained within the body of the speech. When I get an opportunity to speak myself, I will try to elaborate on some of these points. Although the member's job is to say what a good job the government is doing, I will be reminding them, over and over again, of those priorities



which they should have taken in this budget and which they failed to do.

**Mrs. Maria Van Bommel:** I want to address the matter of infrastructure, especially as it is dealt with through our budget for 2008. The member for Parry Sound–Muskoka mentioned that he didn't seem to have any funding going in his direction. I want to remind him that on the 24th of this month they will be opening a bridge project at Armour near Burk's Falls. I know his municipality shared in the \$400 million that went out for roads and bridges, as did all of my municipalities.

In the riding of Lambton–Kent–Middlesex, we received \$21,319,103, all of that invested into Lambton, Kent and Middlesex. Not only does that create jobs for those people who work in that industry, but it also enabled my communities, which suffered a great deal when roads and bridges were downloaded to our municipalities—I was on municipal council at that time. In rural communities like mine, it becomes extremely onerous on the property taxpayers to have to maintain the number of kilometres of roads and bridges we have in rural ridings. So a thing such as the million dollars that went to North Middlesex is going to help them to deal with a street that is running through the back, that has drainage issues and has become a problem for them.

The winter, the kind of winter we've had this year, has certainly exaggerated some of those issues and made them even more urgent for our communities to deal with. So Lambton county, as a community and as a county itself, now has \$3 million to work with so that they can do the repair work they need to do. Warwick township has \$600,000. Chatham–Kent, which I share with our member Pat Hoy, received over \$6 million to do roads and bridges. All of it is very much needed and appreciated. I know my constituents are especially happy to have those dollars.

**Mrs. Christine Elliott:** I appreciate the opportunity to respond to the comments made by the member for Pickering–Scarborough East. As I've been listening to the comments made by the members of the McGuinty government on the other side, I've been hearing lots of talk about spending here, spending there.

There's been an increase in spending of almost \$30 billion since the last budget. That's a lot of money. I think Ontarians can rightfully expect to have all of those services significantly increased and enhanced as a result of all of that spending. But I can certainly say that the residents of Durham region, particularly my riding of Whitby–Oshawa, are not seeing that.

There are so many areas that I could go on about, but I would just like to make a few comments about health care spending. I see that there was some money earmarked for population-based growth spending in terms of some of the GTA-905 areas, of which Whitby–Oshawa is a part. But I can say that we are so significantly underfunded compared to the provincial average that the money that's been allocated over the next three years is merely a drop in the bucket. Our population is growing so quickly that we are simply not able to keep up with the

health care demands of the residents of our region. This is having a significant impact on our community's health, not only in hospital care funding but in social services care funding for children with special needs, for other vulnerable adults, for our mental health population, which has significant mental health concerns. Something needs to be done to address this, because we have situations where our hospitals are now having to balance their budgets, and instead of receiving money that should be coming in as a result of this population-based growth funding, we are seeing hospitals having to cut back in their budgets. This is reaching a crisis proportion, particularly for some of the mental health beds that are being transferred from our community into the Toronto region. I ask the government to deal with this.

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier):** The member for Pickering–Scarborough East, you have two minutes to respond.

**Mr. Wayne Arthurs:** I want to extend my thanks to the members from Parry Sound–Muskoka, Beaches–East York, Lambton–Kent–Middlesex and Whitby–Oshawa for their comments and input.

I spoke, and the budget spoke, to Ontario's future prosperity. We spoke about the kinds of issues that members on various sides of the House at various times have seen as a priority and on which they have tried to find the right balance in that regard.

Both in the fall economic statement and the budget, we spoke to tax cuts for businesses, finding those targeted areas where businesses had asked us to cut taxes to meet their particular needs in the best and most efficient way possible within the capacities that we have.

We spoke in the budget to the needs of those who are vulnerable by our dental initiative. We spoke a year or so ago through the Ontario child benefit. We spoke to increases in social assistance and ODSP. We've set the stage for our poverty reduction activity through the minister responsible.

We spoke to infrastructure. The member from Lambton–Kent–Middlesex spoke clearly about our investments in infrastructure, particularly in respect to our partners, municipalities, as they rebuild their roads and bridges, as well as our partners in education, particularly post-secondary education areas, as they provide, through about \$1 billion of investment, the necessary facilities for young people to be able to take that next major step into a new economy for us.

We spoke to the issues of innovation, where we are going to be in the future, through the first-ever effort at a 10-year potential exemption from Ontario income tax for intellectual properties as a result of research not just in Ontario, but any Canadian university or college or institute, so that we can capture and keep that Canadian innovation right here in Ontario.

We have spoken, I think, eloquently in respect to what Ontarians want through this budget and addressed many of the concerns that this House has.

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier):** Further debate? The member for Nepean–Carleton.



**Ms. Lisa MacLeod:** I understand there is unanimous consent to defer our lead in the official opposition.

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier):** Agreed? Agreed.

**Ms. Lisa MacLeod:** It's a great day for me. They've agreed with me on something over there.

I'm not sure if that spirit of agreement is going to continue as I make my remarks today on the budget bill, because while the parliamentary assistant to the finance minister may paint a rosy picture, what we on the opposite side and certainly workers and taxpayers in this province see are two different things. It's not quite as rosy.

In fact, Ontario is now straddling the line of being a have-not province. Our fiscal capacity has decreased dramatically in Ontario, meaning we're close to being an equalization province. I grew up in Nova Scotia, a have-not province. I came to this province, Ontario, 10 years ago with \$200 in my pocket and a lot of hope—not a job. I got dropped off by a friend of my parents who was up visiting his daughter. I worked really hard, but I always remember, growing up, what Ontario meant to the rest of Canada. It was the economic engine of this country. People were proud that they could send their kids from where we were from, where I grew up, out west, which meant Ontario, not Alberta.

But the economic status in this province is worsening to the extent that we have gone from first to worst in economic growth. We're now on the verge of have-not status. After five years and five budgets, the Liberals have driven down Ontario's per capita fiscal capacity from roughly \$400 above the equalization line just four years ago to barely over \$84 today.

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Over 194,000 manufacturing jobs have left Ontario since 2004. Long gone are the days when kids like me, who graduated from university, left for the prosperous province. Today, because of the mismanagement of the crowd opposite, kids like me, when they're graduating from university, aren't coming here; they're leaving here. That's a sad state of affairs. A lot of times we'll stand over here and my colleague's husband will be criticized, or the former Premier of Ontario will be criticized, but I'll tell you something: When Mike Harris was the Premier of this province, Ontario was the beacon of hope for every other Canadian who wanted a job and who wanted a chance. I can speak from experience on that.

But again, I digress—194,000 Ontarians, people we represent in this chamber, have lost their jobs in the manufacturing sector alone since 2004. That's 64,000 since 2007 alone. That's a lot of people. That's more than anybody who votes for any of us in this place. Our unemployment rate—can you believe this? You can laugh about this, but the unemployment rate in the province of Ontario is higher now than it ever has been. It's higher than the national average for the first time in 30 years.

What they provided us with in this House two weeks ago was nothing more than trinkets, baubles and recycled federal investments. I'll tell you something: They're on

the wrong track. They could have reduced our corporate taxes. They could have reduced regulatory burdens. They could have provided tax relief for low-income families and middle-income families, but none of that was in the budget. It shocks me, because all I ever hear is this rhetoric from the crowd opposite that all it is is "mean Conservatives, mean Conservatives." Oh, my gosh, we're all mean Conservatives because we're the ones who cut taxes. Not so, because guess what? It's the Conservatives, it's the Liberals, it's the New Democrats, it's the Saskatchewan Party that are cutting taxes and reducing the regulatory burden on small businesses right across this country from sea to sea to shining sea. They've all got it except for one guy: Mr. McGuinty. Do you know what he tells people this week, Mr. Speaker? "Don't panic. Steel yourself." Steel yourselves. How do you do that? How do you look at a man who is middle aged, middle income, who's trying to send his kids to university, and you've got no plan for him. All you've got is about 30 billion bucks more in spending, but they're not seeing it at the supper table, I can tell you that. They're not seeing it when they sit down at the evening news. Do you know what? They're worried. I don't know if anyone else has ever been in this situation before. I don't know.

*Interjections.*

**Ms. Lisa MacLeod:** I've got a member here heckling me, and I'm not sure if he has ever had to see his father go on unemployment. I don't know if he has ever seen a child come home from school wondering if they're going to be able to go to university. I don't know, because quite honestly they don't seem to care over there.

But I'm going to tell you something. When you're looking at the provinces now that are the beacon of hope in this country because of Mr. McGuinty's inaction, they chose to cut some taxes. It's not a right-wing policy. Even their rudderless federal leader, Stéphane Dion, will acknowledge that. Instead, these guys chose big government, big spending and higher taxes, all this as we look at the indicators in the budget projections for 2008-09, which say there is going to be a slower economic period, that employment growth in Ontario is going to stall.

The province is projecting a surplus of \$600 million for 2007-08. They enjoyed a revenue windfall of \$5.1 billion in 2007-08, and relative to their budget plan, they spent 95% of that surplus. I ask you, if you have a surplus of \$5.1 billion, first of all wouldn't you just put it toward your debt, so that kids like my daughter and the daughter of my colleague Sylvia Jones from Dufferin-Caledon won't have to pay because Mr. McGuinty decided to throw money away? Wouldn't you think it would be a great idea to give it back to those hard-working families I talked about one minute ago, who are contemplating how they're going to put bread on the table, how they're going to send their kids to school? It's something that didn't even cross the minds of the crowd opposite.

I just want to go back to my community, the city of Ottawa.

**Mr. Jeff Leal:** How's that Senate appointment going?



**Ms. Lisa MacLeod:** I wish I could get a Senate appointment, but I'm still two years too early; I'm still under-age.

**Mr. Jeff Leal:** You'd be Canada's youngest senator.

**Ms. Lisa MacLeod:** Yeah, Canada's youngest senator. Well, thank you so much.

But in all seriousness, I have a lot of work to do here and so do the members of the official opposition—and apparently the third party too—because we seem to be the only ones that are the voice of reason in this province. Whether we agree or not, at least the New Democrats will stand up and fight for their people. At least we'll stand up and we'll fight for their people.

But you know what? They just want to buy people off. They just want to spend on these big luxury government buyouts and things like that; billion-dollar boondoggles and slush funds for the rich and famous. But we're talking about real things and real needs for real people. I know they don't like to hear that over there.

According to Statistics Canada—I go back to 194,000 people losing high-paying jobs in this province. Couple that loss of jobs that are high-paying and what that's done to our economy, and the fact that these guys are raising our taxes because they haven't met a tax they didn't like to hike and they haven't met a fee that they wouldn't like to pass over to us, whether it is a tire tax or a recycling fee or whatever they want to raise, how do working families pay for those losses in income? I'm completely shocked by what they've done.

Now look at my federal colleagues. I had the privilege of working very briefly in Canada's new government. What I like about their philosophy—and it's not a right-wing philosophy—is that to them Big Brother doesn't know best. In fact, what they do is go over the heads of the type of people opposite. They just decide to give tax credits or tax breaks to regular working families. Most Canadians are aware that they receive \$100 a month per child under the age of six to help with child care costs and raising a child.

They're still balancing their books and they're doing great things. Of course, the great things that we can expect right now from the federal government are some of the great things that we were privileged to have here in Ontario under Jim Flaherty, when he was our finance minister. I think he's doing a wonderful job.

The one thing though—I want to go back to the credibility, if you like, of this budget. We talked about the economy, the warning signs, where we're at. And still they put forward this budget. My favourite part of the budget is not one that benefits my riding. In fact, this budget doesn't benefit my riding at all if you look at it. Any Ontarian that says, "It's great that this guy McGuinty has taken my economy and put it in the gutter"—there's not one person in Nepean-Carleton that thinks that and there's not one person in Ontario that does. That's just news for them.

But my favourite part of their budget is this: \$500 million, the centrepiece of their budget—the centrepiece. They were so proud of their skills training. They were

going to give people second-career skills training. You should listen this because this is fun. It was federal money all along, federal money that—you've got to get this part too—they didn't even sign on the dotted line for.

First of all, Prime Minister Harper announced \$500 million in an Ontario trust for second-career training for Ontarians. Well, Dalton McGuinty didn't like that. He was actually quoted as saying something like, "That's not enough. I don't really like it." And then he doesn't only criticize it; he takes another month, puts it in his budget and gives it another name. Then we find out that this is federal money. We should all be applauding Stephen Harper and Jim Flaherty, but we're supposed to be applauding, for some reason, Dwight Duncan. But I didn't; I applauded Jim Flaherty and I applauded Stephen Harper.

1630

Then we find out the next day that they put this \$500 million in there for second-skills training, and they never even called the Prime Minister's office to say thanks for the money. They didn't even sign on the dotted line until the day after the budget was tabled. Talk about asleep at the switch or not caring or whatever it is, but Ontarians deserve better. They deserve better. They deserve a government that's going to take into account every single penny and spend it appropriately.

Instead, what we got was a budget that was based on, "Maybe I'll get my allowance next week if I'm a good boy, but I'm going to spend it anyway." No Ontarian does their budgeting that way. How dare the finance minister of Ontario do his budgeting that way, in addition to all of the excess spending—the \$30 billion, or 41% more of revenues that they've taken in; and \$28.2 billion, or 48% more in expenditures since 2003? You'd think at this point they'd at least cut back the hated health tax that's not going to health care in this province, that's going into potholes and general revenues.

They've created the greatest myth ever over there. They could be doing something for the low-income and middle-class residents of this province by giving them a break, giving them that health tax back. You didn't increase health care spending. In fact, I got another little ditty for you. Your health care spending on this budget is basically the exact same amount of money that was increased in federal transfers. No new money. You've got a centrepiece budget that's \$500 million from Stephen Harper that you repackaged. Then you've got your health care money, which is roughly equivalent to the health care transfers from Stephen Harper, and then you've got nothing else, really.

My favourite part of the budget, other than the \$500 million, is the no-strings-attached cheques that you're giving out to municipalities. In my municipality—even Mr. McNeely over here can attest to this—you shoved almost \$16 million to the municipality, and instead of using it for roads and bridges, they actually used it to shovel snow. It was a snow job; it was given to the snow.

They're giving conditions now, but they didn't. The figure was \$14.9 million. Everyone here knows I have



been lobbying for a bridge, the Strandherd-Armstrong bridge, which was named as a priority for the city of Ottawa—a \$35-million bridge. The member opposite used to actually represent the riding there and didn't get the bridge. So I've been fighting for it, and he's telling me now I'm not going to get it, I guess because I've been effective at exposing their budget for what it really is today. But in any event, it's a \$35-million bridge. This crowd opposite—\$14 million; that's all they've given the city of Ottawa. The second-largest city in the province of Ontario, and we rate second-class status.

I can give you a little bit more: The \$14.9 million was used for snow shovelling, not for infrastructure. If that's not the worst thing possible, here is a comparative. I don't know how any member from the city of Ottawa who sits in the government could be proud of this budget when we found out that between 2004 and 2006 three vital local services—here is a comparative. For transit, the Liberals gave the city of Toronto \$246.06 per household, while Ottawa—don't be shocked—only received \$54.44. For general government services, Toronto cashed in with \$191.97 per household from the province, from Mr. McGuinty's Liberals. Do you want to know what Ottawa got? Ottawa got \$4.44. For public health and ambulance services, Toronto got \$511.86 per household, compared to \$370 for Ottawa. This is per household.

Our taxes in the city of Ottawa are 7.5% higher than they are in Toronto because this Liberal government, its Premier, its two cabinet ministers and two other silent backbenchers have not stood up for this city. I'll tell you something: That's \$519.75 less for Ottawa households than the city of Toronto. That's what we like to call "the McGuinty gap." We call it the McGuinty gap in Ottawa.

**Mr. Bill Murdoch:** Did London get any money?

**Ms. Lisa MacLeod:** I don't know about London, because we've got a couple of members over there who I think are still talking about some of the mismanagement there. I see that we've gotten under their skin.

I just have one final topic to talk about while we're here and I still have time on the clock. It's about agriculture in rural Ontario. I'm very proud to be a representative from the city of Ottawa, Canada's largest agricultural city and probably one of the largest agricultural cities in all of the world. My riding is a sub-urban-rural split. While farmers are struggling to make ends meet, the Liberals didn't put anything in here for them; nothing to help them in 2008-09. In fact, most of the investments for our farmers and for our agricultural sector are in this fiscal year.

I'll share with you the minor initiatives: \$56 million over four years for Pick Ontario Freshness and the Ontario farmers' market initiative; \$7.5 million this year and next for agricultural chemical fuels research at the University of Western Ontario; \$56 million in 2007-08 for the Ontario Veterinary College; and \$12.5 million in 2007-08 for the Vineland Research and Innovation Centre. The proposal to expand the land transfer exemption for transfers of the family farm to include transfers from family farm corporations amounts to a paltry \$1 million across the province.

The Liberals have neglected rural Ontario since 2003, but they did a spectacular job on it in 2008. It has not changed anything. Their plan to help our struggling rural communities is nothing more than a series of band-aid initiatives: \$30 million over the next four years for broadband in southern Ontario; a \$30-million increase in funding over the next four years for RED programs; and work towards the promised eastern Ontario development fund is long delayed. I can tell you something: There is a lot of dismay on this side with respect to the lack of commitment to the Eastern Ontario Development Corp.

I know I've got them all excited over there and I'm very happy about that, and I look forward to their questions and comments. But I remind them to put their partisan rhetoric aside for one moment, think about what's best for this province and think about the province we can be, not what they have made it.

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier):** Questions and comments?

**Mr. Michael Prue:** It's always a privilege to comment on my learned colleague here from Nepean—Carleton. What may not be contained within the four walls of her argument certainly is contained in the enthusiasm with which she delivers. I would like to commend her for what she had to say because as a New Democrat, although I cannot always agree with everything that my colleagues from the official opposition have to state, the reality is that they state it forcefully and genuinely believe in what they say.

I was, though, drawn like a trout to the fly when the statement was made about Mike Harris and what he did for this province. I must, with the greatest of respect for my colleague, tell her that I cannot and do not support the statement that he did great things for this province. I lived through all of that as a municipal councillor and as a mayor. I lived through the amalgamations; I lived through the loss of jobs; I lived through what happened in Toronto; I lived through people being forced to live on 21% less money, hatred of the poor and all the other things that I think are part of that legacy. While I would not deny that he often did what he said he was going to do, what he did was not always in the best interests of this province.

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I would like my friend to keep up her strong statements, but I would like her to temper some of those statements with the reality of what did happen in the Harris years, what did happen to our hospitals, what did happen to our water inspectors, what did happen to the forced amalgamation of the cities which ended up costing enormous amounts of money, because those too are part of that heritage. I think she needs to remember that as well.

**Mr. Bas Balkissoon:** I just wanted to thank the member for Nepean—Carleton and the member for Beaches—East York. I just want to add a couple of comments to this debate on the budget measures bill, Bill 44.

I join my friend and colleague from the city of Toronto council in his comments about the Mike Harris government because we both sat on the city of Toronto



council and we remember those amalgamation headaches that we put up with. We all know that amalgamation has not worked. It has ended up costing the taxpayers of Toronto a whole lot more. Many of us who were on that council struggled to make the city work and I think they're still struggling.

I want to speak about this budget and how it affects my own riding of Scarborough—Rouge River. Let me tell you that in this budget the government has made a commitment to invest in families and the quality of life of the residents in my riding.

We're going to benefit from the \$135 million being invested over three years for dental care for low-income families. There are a lot of families in my riding that will benefit from this program.

The student nutrition program: A lot of my schools are going to benefit from that because there are a lot of young people in my neighbourhood who do come to school some days without breakfast. Our breakfast programs will be augmented and we will definitely improve those children's learning ability. I welcome that.

The next one that is really important to my riding is what this government has decided to do with property tax for seniors. Seniors with a combined income of \$60,000 or a single income of \$50,000 will see their tax reduced by \$250 in the year 2009 and the following year by \$500. That is a direct benefit on their income tax return, and I can tell you, seniors in—

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier):** Thank you. The member for Carleton—Mississippi Mills.

**Mr. Norman W. Sterling:** I'm so pleased to hear my colleague Mrs. McLeod make the case for Ottawa because we have been making the case for Ottawa for I don't know how long with this government. It's absolutely embarrassing in Ottawa to open the press and find out how well the city of Toronto has been treated and then turn to the column where we find out what we have received from the government of Ontario. In this last budget, Ottawa got far less than their population would deem from the municipal grants. I think we got something like \$14 million, when we're the second-largest city in all of Ontario.

The McGuinty gap, as my colleague mentioned, is unbelievable. We pay higher property taxes and we get less money from the government of Ontario year after year, ever since Dalton McGuinty became the Premier. And the guy comes from the city of Ottawa. Can you believe it? I can't believe it.

One other item I wanted to mention: The long-term debt of this province has been increased by \$5.5 billion this year. You put the debt up by \$5.5 billion, even though you had a great surplus to work with. That's costing the taxpayer each year, from now on into the future, over \$300 million a year. That's what you're adding to the mortgage this year, folks. Be proud of it. You're not building an infrastructure with today's money; you're building an infrastructure with our kids' money and our grandkids' money in the future. You're putting a tax on them forever. You're adding \$5.5 billion to the debt this year. Be ashamed of yourselves.

**Mr. Bill Mauro:** I appreciate the opportunity to respond. As will come as no surprise, my take on this year's budget is a little bit different than our friend's across the aisle from Nepean—Carleton. I want to thank her, however, for her comments and perhaps even commend her seatmate for keeping a straight face through that 20-minute diatribe.

I do want to remind her, though, about one little piece in particular that was contained in that budget, the business education tax reductions that we have incorporated in that budget that are very significant for northern Ontario. The reason I want to dwell on that part a little bit is because we love to hear from the Conservative Party—historically in the province and even still, recently—that they're the people who take care of your pocketbook, they're the ones who know how to manage your taxes and they're the ones who have the fiscal wherewithal to take care of things in the province.

When we did our little exchange of services in 1997 or so under the Mike Harris government, when the province of Ontario took over responsibility for the business education tax rates in this province and the exchange of services, the whole revenue-neutral exchange of services that we all remember, what they adopted was a hodge-podge of different business education tax rates across this province. The ones in Thunder Bay and northern Ontario were the highest of any place in the entire province. The average rate in the province was about 1.6; in northern Ontario and in Thunder Bay, it was about 3-point-something. In our budget, we had originally committed, previously, to a seven-year phase-in, where they would come down to the provincial average. We've now accelerated that to a three-year phase-in. What that means in the pockets of northern Ontario businesses is \$25 million more staying in their pockets.

The Conservative government of Mike Harris and Ernie Eves, and those people across the aisle who like to tell you that they know how to fiscally manage this province, ignored the businesses of northern Ontario for six or seven years while they had an opportunity to address this issue. We're putting \$25 million back in the pockets of businesses in northern Ontario, and while there's a lot more I can talk about, that piece I'm especially proud of.

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier):** The member for Nepean—Carleton, you have two minutes to respond.

**Ms. Lisa MacLeod:** To the Liberals, I want to congratulate you. It was under your watch that we went from first in economic growth to worst, that we went from over \$400 above the equalization line to just \$84 above the equalization line. You guys can claim credit for being the government whose unemployment rate, for the first time in 30 years, is higher than the national average. If you're proud of that, folks, give yourselves a pat on the back, because I'll tell you something: It is you people, not us, who have driven away 194,000 manufacturing jobs from this province, 64,000 of them last year alone.

I don't know how they can look at themselves in the mirror after what they have done to the economy of this



province and then stand there behind their Premier as he says, "Steel yourselves, people. Don't panic. It's going to be okay." You're not going to have a job, but we're going to grow bureaucracy in the province.

But I'll tell you something: They could have done something. They could have reduced corporate taxes, reduced the regulatory burdens on small businesses—like those I met with in my riding all day last Friday and all day last Monday—provided tax relief for the middle class. Wouldn't that be an option? I still get the rhetoric that tax cuts are right-wing policies, and I am going to tell you something. They're doing it elsewhere. Conservatives, Liberals, New Democrats—right across this province, right across this country—believe that you have to help small independent businesses; you've got to help the middle class.

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier):** Further debate?

**Mr. Michael Prue:** I'll try to go on in the same vein. I don't know whether that is possible, though.

We are here to debate Bill 44, Budget Measures and Interim Appropriation Act. If people are watching on the television, they are probably wondering, "Haven't we heard all of this debate before in terms of the budget?" I just want to advise them that this is a companion piece, and much of what was said before will be said again. I am sure, in subsequent bills that come forward under the budget act, more of the same will be said in the coming weeks and months.

When I was in the lock-up, as some of us were—on the day that the budget was delivered, anyone who wanted to see it in advance was required to go to a lock-up. I went there with some of our staff and some people from outside agencies. My leader Howard Hampton and I were in the lock-up for a number of hours and had an opportunity to look at what was contained within that very large budget book, so that when we came back to this House under escort and were plunked down in our seats, we had a pretty good idea of what the minister was going to say when he said it.

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When I was in that budget lock-up, many people were looking at the various programs, the costs, the cuts, and what was going to change in this ministry or that ministry. But to me, the telling issue of the whole budget was something that not many people have talked about so far, to date. That was what was contained within the fiscal framework. The fiscal framework sets out where the government gets its money, where it has got it in the past year, and where it is likely to get it in the coming budget cycle.

The fiscal framework said a couple of things. Number one, it said that in 2007-08 the government had planned for \$91.5 billion in revenue, and in fact actually had \$96.6 billion in revenue. So the government was very lucky that more money came in than they had anticipated.

The reason I say it was lucky is because it didn't all come from one source, or it wasn't planned. They got about \$1 billion extra from ordinary individual taxpayers

like all of us, they got about \$2 billion from corporate taxation because the economy was booming and corporate taxes were paying for more, and they got about \$700 million from the federal transfer payments—so money that they had not anticipated at the start of the year, but which had flowed through. Those were the two or three big chunks where that \$5.1 billion came from. So I think the government was very lucky in terms of this last budget cycle, where the money came from and unanticipated revenues.

Then I looked from that point to what was coming next, the planned revenues for 2008-09. The planned revenues for 2008-09 are set at \$97 billion, or about a 0.3% increase over what the government received last year.

I looked in terms of the budget to see what they said about a number of factors, including the number of workers, and see that they are forecasting that the unemployment rate will increase from 6.4% last year to 6.6%, on average, this year.

Those figures were contained within the four walls of the budget only a couple of weeks ago. And in those couple of weeks, what has happened? We have seen that job declines have been much more rapid than forecast. We have seen in the last month alone that there has been a net decline in jobs for the first time in a long time. This isn't just the loss of manufacturing jobs; this is the combination of the loss of manufacturing jobs and the increase in service sector or other jobs which most governments always want to talk about. There has been a net decline in the last month of about 25,000 jobs. That should be contrasted with one of the key government announcements within the budget, that they were going to look after some 20,000 people with new training, while in the last month alone more people lost their jobs than actually will be retrained.

What is more troubling to me is the unemployment rate. The unemployment rate was forecast to go only to 6.6%, on average, over the entire year. We know what is happening with the economy south of the border. One only has to go down to the United States to see all of the impact of Bear Stearns. You only have to go down to the United States to see the impact of the sub-prime mortgages, the number of homes that are boarded up and the number of homes that are for sale in large metropolitan areas. It is enormous, and the loss of jobs taking place in that country is absolutely huge. You have to look at that in terms of where we are already—the forecast of 6.6% unemployment, which we have already passed; we're at 6.7% this month—and I would suggest to everyone that that forecast for the coming year is very rosy indeed.

Now, I hope I am wrong. We all hope that the stock markets rebound, that confidence comes back, that Bear Stearns sells for more than the two bucks that it sold for, or the \$10 they now say it's worth. We all hope that the American economy and our own improve; everybody hopes that's going to happen. But unfortunately, what we are seeing out there is not that case.

By coincidence, yesterday I was walking through the mall and saw one of my old friends walking towards me.



We gave each other a big hug, although she is a Liberal. Her name is Gail Nyberg. Gail Nyberg was quoted by the Premier, by the finance minister and by several people last week as saying what a wonderful job the government is doing. I was not surprised that a Liberal Party member would say that kind of thing and that Gail Nyberg would offer her support to whatever the government was doing. I chastised her a little for her statement that she had to make. She good-naturedly shot back, "Well, that's what Liberals do." We got into a discussion about where she saw the poverty issues, because that's what she was quoted on. She is the head, after all, of the Daily Bread Food Bank here in Toronto. She was talking about the whole poverty agenda and what she expected. I asked her if she was not disappointed in what the government had to say on poverty issues; that surely they were far too meagre to have satisfied her or her organization. She said no, she had been told to expect next to nothing, and they got next to nothing. But next year is the big year for poverty, she said. Next year is the year that all of these things that the government promised are finally going to come forward.

I asked her about the state of the economy, and we continued to talk about the state of the economy and whether she could realistically expect that our economy was going to grow to allow any of this to happen. All she could say, and I think with complete honesty, was, "It looks really bad." She hoped against hope that it was wrong, but if the economy does continue to decline, there may not be anything for the poor. I walked away; we're friends still. She has a different viewpoint on where all of this is going.

It is the decline in the economy next year that leads to what I'm going to say for the balance of my time, and that is what was missing in this budget that should have been there, because many economists are telling us now that this budget was the last of the good-times budgets. This is the last of the budgets where things could and should have been delivered, and the golden opportunity was missed in so many key sectors in this budget for improving what the people of Ontario really need.

The first thing I'd like to start with is the manufacturing and resource jobs. Very little was contained within this budget, and some of what is talked about here today came out in the fall financial statement back last November following the election, when the Minister of Finance stood in the House and talked in his rosy projections of where things were going to go and who was going to get what tax cuts or not get the tax cuts. But the reality is that within this budget very little was done. From this budget there was a total of \$37 million in tax cuts. That's all there was—\$37 million, these much-vaunted tax cuts. But what was missing that New Democrats believe in is the manufacturing investment tax credit, for the people of Ontario to get an opportunity for a tax credit in manufacturing. Now, there are some jobs becoming available—not in the resources sector; certainly not—in the service sector. There are some jobs still being created in the service sector. There are some jobs still being created in high tech. There are some jobs still

being created in banking and, of course, in government. But where there are not jobs is in the underpinning strength of the province of Ontario: There have not been jobs created in the manufacturing sector. We believe that the government missed a golden opportunity. They handed out \$36 million in tax credits, largely to companies that don't need them. When I ask people—sure, you want tax credits for companies, and we all want tax credits for companies, but you have to be selective in how you give them. The tax credits that have been given out both in the fall financial statement and here go to all companies—all companies. They're modest, but they go to all companies. When I remind people that the banks with the much-hated ATM machines get lots of those tax credits; big oil companies that are gouging me at the station every time I go to fill up are getting some of those tax credits; when I remind people that insurance companies, which this year are all profitable and showing profits in the double digits, are all getting money from these tax credits, people wonder whether or not this was an appropriate venue. I would suggest it was not, because what we have seen and experienced from those tax credits that are given federally to the Maritimes is that they are starting to show some promise in the creation of jobs and the keeping of jobs in those locations.

1700

What we're seeing in Manitoba is that the creation of that tax credit is allowing companies to not lay off workers and that the unemployment rate is certainly not anywhere near what it is here in Ontario. What is showing in Quebec is that it has been earmarked in such a successful way in the last couple of weeks since they came on board that areas with high unemployment rates are starting to really see an opportunity to get those jobs back. I think that's all missing here.

I take that as the first sort of problem, that the whole job sector has been woefully done wrong by very modest tax cuts—done wrong because they have not been targeted to protect and enhance the manufacturing sector of the province, which, after all, in the last 50 years has provided probably one of the highest standards of living in the world, which we are seeing rapidly decline, only to be replaced oftentimes by much poorer types of work.

I went on to look at what else was in the budget. We came across the whole area of long-term care. I remember the last election. I remember what the Liberals talked about, not only in the last election but the one before that, having a revolution in long-term care. We looked in there and saw that there was some money, some \$278 million over three years for various programs, \$93 million of that for the fiscal year 2008-09. But one only had to start to do the math and listen to the people who are there in the long-term-care homes, the people who provide the service, even the people who pay them, to understand what that is going to do.

The Ontario Association of Non-Profit Homes and Services for Seniors, OANHSS, called for \$586 million in increased funding for long-term care in order to guarantee a minimum average of three hours of care per resident per day—\$350 million specifically for nursing



and personal care. They didn't get it; they got half of that. That has left Ontario near the bottom of the ranks of how we care for our elderly; how we care for those who are frail; how we care for those who have cognitive disabilities, who have Alzheimer's disease; how we care for people who have helped to build this province and some of whom fought for Canada in times of war. We treat them quite abysmally in this province. This government promised to do something about it and only took a half-hearted measure.

When we did the mathematics and tried to figure out what was happening, the reality is that the increase which \$586 million would have brought us—up to three hours to make Ontario in the average range—was not there. In fact, all that was there was enough money to add about six minutes of personal care a day.

I don't know about you, but I've had many opportunities to go into the long-term-care homes, many opportunities to see my constituents, and an opportunity until she died to visit my mother-in-law. She was there in that long-term-care home, and the people there struggled against all odds to provide the kind of care that I only wish we could have given in our own home. But they loved her and looked after her. They did the very best they could with minimal resources. I believe that she deserved more dignity, and I believe that the people who live there deserve more dignity. They certainly did not get it from this budget.

I have to say I'm very disappointed. The government can talk all it wants about how much money they spent, but it wasn't enough. It wasn't enough for our mothers, our fathers, our grandmothers, our grandfathers—the people who built this country, the people who fought for it. It simply was not enough. If we want to be at the top of the pack, if we want to be like Saskatchewan or Manitoba, if we want to provide 3.5 hours of care, it's going to cost a billion dollars, not the amount this government has put forward.

Obviously, they've said in the budget that our seniors are not, perhaps, as important as some other aspects of what money is to be spent.

So I then looked at poverty. Oh, there was a big ballyhoo. I read the next day in the paper about a 2% increase to ODSP rates and a 2% increase to Ontario Works, knowing full well that that was not going to be the case because the amount of money that had been budgeted was only \$36 million for this year and \$86 million for next. The question had to be asked, and I asked the question of the finance minister in this House: "When are you going to institute this huge 2% increase to our poorest citizens?" I got back the answer I expected: "It's going to be later in the fall, perhaps in the last quarter of the budget year"—so that the government doesn't have to spend that money but can try to pretend and look good to all those who are out there watching on TV that there's this huge 2% increase to our poorest citizens.

It is a shame. It is a shame what happened back in 1995. It is a shame that people who lived below the

poverty line had 21% of their monies taken away from them. It is an absolute disgrace that over all these years they have never again had, as poor as they were, the level of living where they were in 1995.

Since 1995, as the Minister of Community and Social Services said again today when asked a question by one of her colleagues, there has been a 9% increase. I would like to remind the House again how that 9% is looked at: 3% in the first budget, which took place in 2004; 0% in the next year; 2%, which was only for the latter half of the year, in the third budget; 2%, which was only for the last quarter, in the fourth budget; and 2%, which is only for the last quarter, in this budget. That's how the 9% is arrived at. That's where the numbers come from. But the reality is that from 2003 to 2009, when the money is actually delivered from this budget, there will have been something in the effect of about an 11% increase in inflation, so that the people, by the time they get this last amount of money, will actually fiscally be worse off under the Liberal government than they were in the deepest, darkest days of Mike Harris. I don't know how to put it any more succinctly than that.

I started to ask questions about the rates. I am particularly concerned about the children, as I believe all members should be, but the big concern for me is all of those people, Ontarians with disabilities—all of the people who cannot work. They all wish they could work, but they cannot work. They cannot work because of age; they cannot work because of infirmity; they cannot work because they have doctors' letters saying they cannot, they have medical conditions; they cannot work because they have psychiatric or psychological problems. They cannot work, and every single one of them has gone through hoops, through doctors and government doctors, to be certified that they cannot work. We are keeping them in eternal poverty because the amounts of money that are given each and every year do not match inflation, and in the end they tend to be worse off.

The government answers, "Oh, we have a thing for that. We've raised the minimum wage." I started to laugh. You can raise the minimum wage to \$100 an hour. These people cannot work, and I don't know why the government hasn't cottoned on to this. A raise in the minimum wage, which I will deal with in a minute, does not affect people on ODSP and people on general Ontario Works. They do not and cannot work, so it doesn't matter.

The government's second answer to this is, "Look at all the wonderful programs we are giving to young people to help them stay in school, and the new program for youth" and this and that. But if one goes back and looks especially at ODSP, if one goes back and looks at Ontarians with disabilities, and the minister will confirm this—I know, because she is listening intently; she will confirm that 92% of the people on ODSP have no dependent children. So it doesn't matter what the government does in terms of children and child benefits and this program and that program and putting more money in the schools and giving an additional dollar a week for apples



or whatever. It doesn't matter. Those people—92% of them on ODSP; 200,000 people in this province—are worse off today. No government program has affected them at all. When they get a raise, it is so tiny and delivered so late in the year that they must despair. I certainly know that when they come to see me in my office, they are in despair.

1710

They desperately look for housing. If they're lucky enough to find assisted housing, they grab it. They desperately ask where they can get additional food, and we have to, unfortunately, direct them to food banks. They desperately look to where they can get any kind of service at all, such as a pass on the TTC in Toronto. They desperately look for any kind of assistance at all. They come with tears in their eyes. Some of them are very proud. There's nothing they can do.

Some of those people have been born with developmental disabilities. God bless the people who work with them. They go out there day in and day out and try to find things for adults with developmental disabilities to do, something meaningful. There are some wonderful groups where the people work part-time, where they deliver sandwiches, where they—I'm just trying to think of all of the ones that I see around. They hire them. But where these developmentally disabled adults have been able to scratch out a meagre existence—sometimes with a few dollars, sometimes at minimum wage, sometimes with less than minimum wage—payments are clawed back. It's clawed back.

I was hoping in this budget to see something that would allow them to keep some of that money, but there was nothing in this budget that did that. I have to say how disappointed I am that this government sees people with very real disabilities trying their very best to go out there and find a part-time job, even if it's only a few hours a week, and the government claws it back. Now, they do let them keep a couple of dollars; I'm not going to say they don't let them keep some. But they don't let them keep enough to allow them to go up to the poverty level. That's all we are asking: Let them go up to the poverty level. That's what we ask of the \$10 minimum wage, that's what we ask for ODSP recipients, and that is certainly what we ask for the children who have, I guess, the misfortune of being born into families where their parents cannot or do not work.

None of that is here. None of it is here at all. When it is here, it's 2011, or 2014, or, "Wait till it's all folded in," or, "Wait until the \$10.25 comes in three years from now." I want you to know what that means to someone who's struggling today. If we gave them \$10 an hour now, their lives would be changed immeasurably. That would work out to about \$50 a week more than they're getting—the \$8.75. That would mean about \$2,600 a year more than they're getting now and it would actually bring them very close to the poverty line. I don't think that's unreasonable. I don't think it's fair to have them wait. I don't think the arguments the government has made around this budget are appropriate.

The national child benefit clawback: This is a great one. I've asked the minister this question so many times that she's got it written down. I'm sure she pulls it out of the drawer when I start to ask the question: all the things that are happening and how the government's new plan is going to do away with that.

Just this week, we had a group come in from Campaign 2000. They have written this so succinctly that I would like to read out what they have to say about this new government plan. They have set it down in a couple of paragraphs which should explain to the entire world that this new Ontario child benefit plan is not going to help the poorest of the poor, or those children who have the unmitigated gall of growing up in a family whose parents cannot work.

It says, "This important new program will assist many Ontario children. But a fundamental unfairness is being built into the system—the children of parents who receive social assistance will not receive the full value of the OCB. When the monthly OCB starts in July 2008, social assistance rates will be reduced, effectively clawing back a portion of the OCB.

"By the time the full benefit is paid out in 2011, children whose parents receive social assistance will get a net benefit of only \$50/month/child, not the full \$92, because OW and ODSP rates will decrease as the OCB increases. In addition, after July 2008, the winter clothing and back-to-school allowances will be rolled into the OCB. These small annual allowances help families with the cost of new clothes and school supplies for their growing children, and help low-income children have a fair chance at school. Incorporating them into the monthly payment—when incomes are already so low—will mean forcing families to decide between paying for food and buying their child a warm winter coat.

"This is unacceptable. All low-income children, regardless of the source of their parents' income, should receive the full value of the Ontario child benefit. 2011 is a long time to make low-income children wait for improvements in their families' incomes. The roll-out of the OCB must be accelerated to allow all low-income families to better cope with the costs of raising children."

I had hoped for something good in this budget about welfare. I had hoped for something in this budget in terms of wages for those who live below the poverty line. I had hoped for so much, because the Premier campaigned on this during the last election. Perhaps I did not have the benefit of Gail Nyberg, knowing that nothing was expected in this budget and that it's all going to come next year if the economy continues to be buoyant.

But the year it's going to take to get us to the next budget is a long time for the poor, and it's a long time especially for a child. It's a long time for that child to have to sit there in old clothes, it's a long time to be hungry and it's a long time to have to go to school without the proper supplies that he or she would have had before this government's budget. I only have to say, I am profoundly disappointed that anyone on the government side stands up and says that this is a good thing.



I went to look at provincially mandated social programs and the downloading of these provincial programs on the municipalities. I had hoped that something would be done on this. Certainly in the last McGuinty government, the one before the last election, there were some very modest programs designed to reduce the provincially mandated programs from the municipalities. There was a little bit about land ambulance, there was a little bit about ordinary ambulance, there was some talk about ODSP rates and general welfare rates, but I didn't see anything new in this budget. I didn't see anything at all that is designed to help the municipalities.

Let me tell you, if the economy does start to go down, and if it goes down rapidly, the cost to municipalities, which are ill-equipped to pay for social programs, will be enormous. I do know that the city of Toronto, the place from whence I come, was able to pay its last year's budget, was able to make ends meet and balance it out at the end, because they virtually depleted the social welfare budget. They are hoping against hope that the government takes it back, and if the government cannot take it back fast enough, there is virtually no money for the hundreds or thousands of people who will be reliant upon social welfare in the coming year. There was nothing much for municipalities.

So I went on to look at other things. What was there that everybody could be happy about?

**Mr. Khalil Ramal:** One billion dollars.

**Mr. Michael Prue:** I'm hearing "\$1 billion" over here, but I'm not sure what—

**Mr. Khalil Ramal:** Check it out.

**Mr. Michael Prue:** "Check it out," he says. I have checked it out; it's been nothing but checking it out for the last two weeks.

Municipal infrastructure funding—I thought maybe there's some money here. I listened that there might be some money. There was some talk of \$1 billion in new funding for municipal infrastructure; \$400 million of that only was new money for bridges and roads outside of Toronto, and the finance department could not or has not to date detailed how much of it will be allocated to the north. They stated it would be announced shortly. This was as of budget day, and I'm not sure, having heard Mr. Mauro speak about this, whether or not that's what he was talking about, that the money was finally earmarked for northern development. But the analysis here is that what has been given is very low in terms of the actual need.

1720

I'm not surprised that municipalities are all lining up to say, "Hurray, we got some more money." I remember being a municipal politician. I remember every time a government turned around and said, "We're going to cost-share with you on this infrastructure," or "We're going to cost-share with the province of Ontario and here's a million dollars. What are you going to do with it?" I remember what we did in East York: We built a community centre. The community centre is still there. It was a good thing. We cost-shared. One third came from

us, one third came from the province of Ontario, one third came from the federal government, and we all said nice things about the various governments. We took the money and we were happy. I'm not surprised that this is what's happening here.

But I think the municipalities were all very upset to learn that they had been brought down to this Legislature, that they had been paraded around with the Minister of Finance the week before, that they had said gushy things about how glad they were to get their hands on some new money—I'm talking specifically about Bill 35, which will be debated tonight, I believe—that they were all told that if there was an increase in money above \$800 million, then they were all going to get it. So they were all rubbing their hands in glee, expecting that there were going to be great sums of money. But when you look at the budget, the budget forecast is only for \$600 million. That means we're not going to get to the \$800-million figure. It means that there will be no money for municipalities.

When the finance minister was asked here to reconcile his two bills, his two finance bills, one promising them all the excess above \$800 million, and the actual budget saying there's only \$600 million, so there is no excess, his simple answer was, "We put the money into infrastructure already." The money that was given on one day was taken away on another. The money that's given here now is a pittance in comparison to what is actually needed. The money that is here will not build the crumbling infrastructure, which is estimated at \$65 billion across the width and breadth of this province. I have to say again we were very disappointed on behalf of municipalities in what was here.

I went on to health. Now, I have the great happiness of being on the finance committee. We travelled from one end of this province to another over eight cold and blizzard days in the month of January, hearing from 175 deputations, looking at 100 written submissions, asking people what they wanted. Some of the strongest and most poignant of statements were made around building community health centres and how they would help hugely in communities where there were not enough doctors, how they would help hugely in places where there was poverty and where there was a lack of access. They talked hugely about helping our First Nations peoples.

I opened up the budget and there wasn't one cent—not one cent—for new community health centres or aboriginal health access centres. This would have been a relatively small investment for the government to have made. Twenty new community health centres would have cost the government a very small amount: about \$5.5 million. It would have given huge access to aboriginal communities. It would have given huge access to northern communities or to those communities that live in poverty. But there was nothing here in the budget. If there was any place, in my view, that health dollars could be spent more wisely, it certainly hasn't been pointed out to me.

I understand the needs. I understand that getting primary care, getting excellent care with a nurse practitioner, perhaps a psychologist, perhaps a chiropractor all



under one roof is what most communities would want—and it is not there. If any of my colleagues have had an opportunity, and I know some have, to travel throughout northern Ontario, to travel to some of the poorest communities in our country, and in fact to some of the poorest communities in our hemisphere, they would know how desperately this is needed. When you go to the nursing station in a place like Attawapiskat or Peawanuck, in an isolated community that has no roads, that is all there is there. We should want for our First Nations people what we have for ourselves. There was not a penny in there for that, or a penny for all of the communities that are crying out for a community health centre.

I went on to housing. I thought, “Surely to God there’s going to be something for housing.” What was in there? Almost nothing. There was \$100 million to repair existing housing. One can say, “That’s good,” except in Toronto alone they need \$300 million this year and every year for a number of years to get them up to code. You have to remember that this was a downloaded service of the Harris government that the McGuinty government has had for five years and has done virtually nothing with. The state of repair has decayed over each and every one of those five years to where it is now in an atrocious and abominable state. I challenge any of the members to go into those housing places, to go into Jane-Finch, to go into Regent Park, to go into all of those places where people live—Lawrence Heights—and look at the state of the infrastructure.

In fact, for I don’t know how many years running, the city of Toronto has had the dubious distinction of being called the largest and worst slum landlord in Toronto. The Phil Wynns of this earth, who used to have the worst slums, don’t have them anymore; the city of Toronto does. Those homes are literally falling apart. Walk through them and see the cockroaches and the mice—try not to step on the stuff. See all the excrement around the buildings or sometimes in the halls. See the leaking roof or the plaster falling off. See the windows that will neither keep the draft out nor the heat in. See people demoralized. Look at them, talk to them, see where they live, see what they have to put up with, and then, for God’s sake, do something.

But what’s contained in this budget? One hundred million dollars—Toronto alone needs \$300 million—for the province. It will leave the province of Ontario, again, along with the various cities, be they Hamilton, be they St. Catharines or Toronto or Ottawa, of having the distinction of being the largest slum landlords in the province. Nothing.

Then we ask, “If you’re not spending the money on things that the government or various governments already own, where are you spending the money?” It was humorous, if I might say, to watch the Premier go all over the map when questioned by one of my colleagues, Ms. DiNovo. He went all over the map on how many housing units had been built. He started off with 18,000, if you remember that; “18,000 units we built.” Then he

had to pull back a little. “Actually,” he said, “we built almost 4,000, and we have another 3,000 where construction has started but nobody lives in them yet. We have another 4,000 where some planning has taken place. It’s up to the municipalities. They’re looking at the planning issues”—which can, as we all know, take years. Then he said, “The last of them are still a dream in a developer’s eye.” There it is. The much-vaunted housing strategy of the McGuinty government for five years is to build some 4,000 homes that are actually occupied. And in this budget, not an additional cent.

One might ask, “Where did the money come to build those 4,000 homes?” It was all federal dollars. The federal government gave that money to the McGuinty government in the last Parliament to build affordable housing. This government to date has not put one penny of its own money into a resource that we all know is desperately needed. There are 75,000 families on the waiting list in Toronto alone; 165,000 families in Ontario who don’t have decent housing.

When I opened up the Toronto Star on the weekend, there was a story of a gentleman formerly from Mexico who every night goes and sleeps in a bank tower in a stairwell somewhere around 11 o’clock at night. In the morning, he wakes up—he has a \$25 card per month—he goes down to the YMCA, he has a shower, he cleans himself up and he goes out looking for work. This is just one of countless people in our city and our province who have no housing because this government in its wisdom over five years has only built 4,000 units with someone else’s money and has done nothing whatsoever with the rest.

1730

We do know that there are hundreds of units for our First Nations communities that have been planned and never been built, including some of those in Toronto.

I looked at the people, I looked at what the Save Our Structures Committee were asking for, I looked at what was given, and I see again that everything has been woefully inadequate.

I went on to see what else this government had promised, what else we could reasonably expect in a budget. What about the schools? The Premier in the last election said that he was going to be the education Premier. I must say, if anything has been done—and I don’t think it has been done well enough—there has been some movement on that front. I will say that to Liberals and all present: that there has been some movement. But what still remains to be done is not being done. There is peace with the teachers. There is a better ratio in some regards between the teachers and the class sizes. There are some monies for available programming. But what there has not been is monies available for capital, monies available for the rebuilding of our schools.

In Toronto, in Ottawa, in Hamilton, in all the large cities, in all the downtown cores, the average age of the schools is 45 years. I don’t have to tell you, if you have a 45-year-old house, the kind of enterprise you need to put into it—because I have; I have a 50-something-year-old house. It’s constantly in need of a new roof, a new



furnace; it has things that leak and go bang in the night. Our schools are no different. They have not been repaired and there is nothing in this budget to repair them.

People for Education confirmed that, "Half of Ontario's schools are at least 45 years old. The situation has been made worse by the fact that over the past four years, school boards have been deferring maintenance and building projects to compensate for inadequate government funding. Forty-eight of 72 Ontario school boards reported that they spend more on school operations than they receive from the province." So the province gives the money, the school boards are of course required to pay the teachers and everyone else, the school boards are forced to rob from themselves, and where do they do that? They do that from the maintenance budget. Money needs to be spent there. There was no money in this budget to do it.

I kept looking to see where the money might be going. This government talks a great deal about new immigrants and recognizing immigrant rights and doing things. Sadly, the citizenship allocation falls by 2%, to a mere \$89 million in this budget.

They talk about the environment, and so little was done. I looked at the province of British Columbia. Whether you agree with them or not, they had some real guts. They went out and talked about a carbon tax; they went out and talked about carbon footprints; they went out and talked about changing the tax system in order to protect the environment of British Columbia. Other provinces have gone way out of their way—Quebec in particular—to do things that will ease the crunch on our environment. And what did I find in this particular budget? An absolute disaster when it comes to addressing the issue of climate change and reducing our greenhouse gas emissions. There is no climate change plan before this Legislature, not in the first year of the McGuinty government or the second or the third or the fourth; not after the election; not now; not ever. There is no climate change plan and there is nothing that will help us to reduce greenhouse emissions to 6% below the 1990 levels by 2014. That's what Ontario and Canada signed on for in terms of Kyoto. It is not there. I don't know how we are ever going to meet that unless the government gets serious.

There was nothing in here at all, save and except if you buy a bicycle that costs less than \$1,000. You can now save the PST.

**Mrs. Liz Sandals:** And on your helmet.

**Mr. Michael Prue:** And on your helmet.

**Mrs. Liz Sandals:** Helmets are very important.

**Mr. Michael Prue:** Yes, helmets are very important; I would agree wholeheartedly. I think maybe the government should also take the private member's bill of Mr. Milloy, who is now a cabinet minister, dust it off and ensure that people wear helmets. I'll speak to that on another day.

*Interjection.*

**Mr. Michael Prue:** Mr. Levac did it as well. Okay, well, please dust it off and bring it back, and this time get

some cabinet support around that issue. But I digress, because the heckle was a good one.

There were no meaningful programs for long-term funding for residential, institutional and commercial retrofit programs on the scale necessary to actually affect climate change. We know that most of our schools, being 45 years old, have very little or no insulation, particularly in the roofs. We know that if we actually retrofitted them and conserved energy, we could probably halve the budgets. The school boards would be very happy, and we would be helping the environment. We know that on many of our larger buildings in the downtown core of Toronto, Ottawa or Hamilton, you could put on green roofs, which would help enormously, but there was no money made available for that. There are literally hundreds or thousands of things that could be done, and they're not being done.

In his special report in 2007, the Environmental Commissioner stated that the Ministries of the Environment and Natural Resources were "starved of funding for core functions," and that in real terms they were operating with fewer resources than in the early 1990s. We need to do something, and it certainly was not contained within the budget.

I've talked about First Nations. I've talked about the poverty of those First Nations and about wanting to do something for them. I listen every day, and I know it's a difficult circumstance that the government has found itself in in KI, but we need to do a lot more than we have done for our First Nations people during my lifetime. Ontario is a signator to Treaty 9, which was signed way back, more than 100 years ago. It affects virtually all of northeastern Ontario. It affects the people of Cree descent. It affects the people of at least one town of Ojibway descent: the town of Marten Falls, Ogoki. It encompasses a huge swath of land probably half the size of France. We have not lived up to the obligations of that treaty. The treaty said that we were equal partners with the federal government to ensure that First Nations people residing within that territory were given all the rights and freedoms which they possessed at that time and that they were to be brought into the larger Ontario family. That has not happened.

People from Treaty 9 came down to ask about jails. They have their own police force that had been set up and has been successful in many communities over many years, but they have antiquated jails. When a man died, I believe it was in the Attawapiskat jail—because if you're in jail, you can't get out. It's made out of wood. It started to burn down, and there was nobody there to let him out because the police officers go home at night. They only have enough police officers to staff during the day. He went home that night. The jail burned down, and the man died. That's just an example of what happens. There was no one on duty. The structures are poor. The structures don't work. There was nothing in the budget. I understand that they came to meet the minister. They asked for \$12 million in order to rebuild the jails across northern Ontario in all of the small communities so that they would meet the code. The minister told them he wasn't



going to give them the money until the federal government gave it first. I don't think that's what the province should be doing. I think we have an equal obligation under Treaty 9 to treat our First Nations with respect. We have an equal obligation with the federal government, and if they're not going to do what they should be doing, then we should be prepared to do our part alone. That was not contained within this budget.

The Liberals promised to address revenue sharing. They have not done that either. Some of my colleagues and I had an opportunity to travel throughout northern Ontario. You had an opportunity to go to some of those places. I don't know that you remember them. I don't know whether you remember that milk in some of these outlying places up on Hudson's Bay costs \$16 a bag. Something you can buy here in Toronto for \$4 costs \$16 there. A 50-pound bag of potatoes costs well over \$100—little, tiny things. I remember my colleague from Willowdale commenting about his favourite ice cream. He actually found it in one of the northern stores. He pays around \$4 for it in a store in Toronto; it was \$27 there. That's the kind of life, with very little resources, with no money, that these northern communities have. They have no roads. They have no sewers. Most of them have boil-water advisories. The kids very seldom finish high school. There are a lot of problems with drugs. The communities are just not self-sufficient.

1740

If you ever have an opportunity, I would ask all of you to look at what we have in northern Ontario, around Hudson and James Bay, in those communities. Then just skirt around the bottom of James Bay and into Quebec and look at the homes and look at the cultures in Quebec, where the government of the province has done an admirable job. I know that there are resources and I know the James Bay hydro project did put some money in, but all of those communities have roads. None of ours have roads. All of those communities have sewage and septic systems; none of ours do, that work. They all have clean, potable water. We don't have it. They all have wonderful schools. They have a dropout rate that is pretty much the national average. We can't say that in our communities. They treat their First Nations with respect, and I don't believe we have done so at all.

Giles Bisson put forward his bill on revenue sharing. We travelled northern Ontario and met with countless First Nations communities to talk about revenue sharing. After all, it's all they want. They want to get some money and some benefit out of the use of their land, something that every single municipality in this province can and does have.

They are not getting it, and all of a sudden we find ourselves in the situation in KI. We find ourselves in the situation because those First Nations leaders were not consulted. Because they said no, they found themselves in jail. I've heard what the government has to say. I've heard what the minister has to say. He wishes they weren't in jail. We all wish they weren't in jail, but the sad reality is, they are. They're there because they're trying to protect their resource. They're trying to protect

their community and the people who live in that community. All they want from the community is an opportunity for access.

If you get a chance to go up to Attawapiskat, if you get a chance to go up to the De Beers mine, take a look at how successfully that has been incorporated, how successful one company has been in involving the local community, in providing jobs, in providing education and in giving opportunity. That is all the other native communities want. That's all they want. It's all they need, and it's not here in this budget. It could easily have been that way.

I can see my time is running out. Just one last thing, because I would be remiss if I didn't talk about agriculture. I'm not the most likely person to talk about that, having grown up my whole life in Toronto. In fact, it was only last year that I had an opportunity—my wife and I rented a farm for a week. Now, it wasn't a farm with chickens and things running around—

**Ms. Lisa MacLeod:** Why not?

**Mr. Michael Prue:** It wasn't. When I got there I was hoping for that, but it wasn't that. It was a farm where they grew wheat, and they were harvesting the wheat with great big combines and things. We watched that, and it was good. We spent a week near Creemore, Ontario, and it was a remarkable place.

One thing a city boy knows, though, is where his food comes from. I don't grow it myself. Somebody else works really, really hard to grow it for me, and I think that farmers and the agricultural community deserve the hugest respect in this province. I didn't see that meted out in the budget.

Sadly, when I go to Niagara, when I go down and see all of those orchards, when I see the pears and the peaches, I know that the only canning factory east of the Rockies is about to shut down. Something is terribly, terribly wrong with the farming community. Something is terribly wrong that we cannot eat and access the food that we produce so easily and so beautifully. I think something needs to be done in terms of the budget that is not there for our agricultural community.

As a city boy, I want to tell the farmers that I appreciate and acknowledge everything they do—the hard work they do, the risks they take—and that this government should recognize it as well. They should recognize it. They should put it within the budget. There should be monies available for struggling farmers. That's everything, from the tobacco farmers around Delhi, Ontario—because they need to be bought out. It's a struggling industry that's about to die. They know it too. They need to be bought out. We need to resource and give guarantees to keep places like CanGro, where our fruits are canned. We need to make sure the agricultural industry in Ontario remains strong. I did not see that in the budget.

Overall, when you look at the whole budget, what started out with so much promise and so many promises being made at the time of the last election, what started out with a government that said it was going to do so much, what started out with a government that found itself with \$5.1 billion in extra unaccounted money, has



largely been frittered away. It has been frittered away in ways that I don't think are going to end up doing the province any good.

At the end of it all, when it comes to next year, when it comes to a potential downturn in the economy where there is going to be a mere \$200 million of extra revenue available to the province of Ontario, when programs are going to have to be designed and implemented with no additional monies, I am very afraid of what is going to happen. All of those great things that were possible in this budget will not be possible if the revenue is not there to do it. Given what is happening in the United States, given what is happening with the high cost of oil, given what is happening with our loonie, which is staying pretty strong in spite of the bank's suggestion that it may fall down to 90 cents within a couple of years—it actually went up the same day the bank made that announcement; so much for their prognostication—I am very, very nervous and worried.

I want to assure my friend Gail Nyberg, with whom all this started, that this is a tough budget year. I wish the government had taken the actions that it could have and should have done while it had the money. I am only afraid that, come next year, they will not be able to do so.

I cannot and will not be supporting the budget, because it has failed me in so many ways.

#### *Interjections.*

**Mr. Michael Prue:** I know that the members will taunt over the days and weeks that follow, “You did not support the budget,” and they will pull some little minor aspect out which I might be able to agree with and will say, “You didn't support this or didn't support that.” It's always some little, tiny thing, you know, something that I ask about: “You didn't support our budget and it was in the budget.” But I have an obligation to look at the whole thing. I have to ask: Is this the right direction? Has the government done everything it could have done, given the resources it has? Sadly, the answer is no.

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier):** Questions and comments?

**Mr. Bob Delaney:** The previous speaker concluded some of his comments by referring to the government's investment of infrastructure money as “frittering it away.” This is wrong. This is simply wrong.

Mississauga now has more transit money because we invested it in infrastructure at the end of the year.

Just two weeks ago, my colleague from Mississauga South, on behalf of all of the members from Mississauga, talked about the investment of \$11 million in a new Rattray Marsh water sewage treatment plant that increases the capacity for water sewage. This is not frittering it away.

We put \$12 million in a new firefighting training centre, money that was available at the end of the year. This was not frittered away. This was an intelligent, forward-looking investment.

We put \$9.5 million at the end of fiscal year 2007-08 in bridge and road repairs. This was an intelligent investment of money.

I know the member and his party love to spend other people's money, but as a government, we want to build Ontario and to create more opportunity for all, not merely take from one group and give to another, and that's what this budget does. It builds opportunity; it expands the pie. It makes more resources available. It helps our cities deliver infrastructure that our businesses need to invest in.

Just as one closing example, Peel Non-Profit Housing has now completed two non-profit housing complexes, and they are occupied, with Ontario's help. The priority was given to seniors and low-income families.

Intelligent investment: That's why I'm supporting the budget.

1750

**Mr. Gerry Martiniuk:** This budget shortchanged long-term-care facilities in a massive way. They were hoping that they wouldn't be forced to keep people waiting to go to the washroom for hours, that there would be an opportunity to feed all the residents. This budget has failed them. But I think it gets worse, because I seem to recall not too long ago, in 1988, that the Peterson government, which was a Liberal government, froze long-term-care beds. They decided to freeze beds, and they didn't build any beds for two years. Strangely enough, when the NDP were elected in 1990, they continued the freeze. For seven years, not one new long-term-care bed was built in the province of Ontario.

I remember that in the 1995 election when we promised to construct over 10,000 new beds, no one seemed to be interested in it. I was in a long-term-care home speaking to the residents, and their lack of interest was interesting. After a little while, I realized that they already had their beds and they were not concerned with getting a bed, and therefore were not concerned with that particular topic. No one—and seniors aren't interested in talking about long-term care, simply because people don't intend to go into them and they usually don't go into them until their health requires them to. It's an easy way to save money in the short run. In the long run, it creates all sorts of problems for the health care system and in particular in the hospitals.

The bed blockers have started to go up once again. They cost this province a lot of money. They are in the hospital when they don't want to be. They want to be in a long-term-care home. I think this budget has failed our long-term-care residents in Ontario.

**Mr. Bill Mauro:** I'm happy to offer a couple of more minutes, especially in regard to the comments from the member for Beaches–East York. In the same theme as my colleague who spoke a couple of minutes ago, I do want to make mention on the infrastructure piece. He used the language “frittered away” and actually tended to characterize the investments in infrastructure almost as if they were photo opportunities for members of our party along with local mayors and reeves.

When we came to power in October 2003, people will remember very clearly that there was a lot of discussion of not only the fiscal deficit that was existing in the province of Ontario, which we identified six months later



as actually being \$5.5 billion, or the services deficit that was exhibited through massive cuts in the public service, especially in the Ministry of Natural Resources and the Ministry of the Environment, but we also became aware through discussions with college presidents, university presidents and mayors and reeves in all of our communities of a huge infrastructure deficit that existed in Ontario. One of the ways that party was paying for their tax cuts was by avoiding invests in certain areas, and one of them was in infrastructure.

In our last budget, in the riding of Thunder Bay–Atikokan, which I'm pleased and proud to represent, the \$9 million or so that we invested in community infrastructure, roads and bridges, in my riding was much more than a public relations exercise. I can tell you that Mayor Lynn Peterson is very proud of the money that we put into the city of Thunder Bay; that Mayor Lucy Kloosterhuis is very proud of the money that we put into a community like Oliver Paipoonge; that Mayor Dennis Brown in Atikokan is very proud of the money that we put into the community.

The member for Beaches–East York talked often about his travels in northern Ontario; he should understand and appreciate that communities like that, that have small assessment bases and small tax revenues, appreciate very much these investments in infrastructure, in roads and bridges, because they are the very communities that can least afford this kind of infrastructure.

**Mr. John O'Toole:** It's always a pleasure to follow up and, out of respect, respond to the member for Beaches–East York. I do respect the time he spent on municipal government.

What is surprising, and not surprising with the fact that he was somewhat generous to the government in his comments, is that he has a Toronto mindset. He doesn't get the scourge of despair in my riding of Durham. The manufacturing sector is struggling, and he should know that. Not everyone works for the government, although McGuinty often thinks that.

What I'm going to refer to, in the limited time I have here, is that the Ontario Chamber of Commerce did a survey in early 2008. They were told by business what the six main concerns or categories were, where they expected some sort of response by the McGuinty government. I think the member for Beaches–East York mentioned a couple of them; regulatory compliance was one. They mentioned specifically the WSIB, the environment, and overtaxation was mentioned several times; energy prices, which is a function of the provincial government—and we all know that the new regulated price plan is code language for higher energy costs, whether it's gasoline or electricity. Corporate tax levels were mentioned. This is the chamber of commerce; this isn't John Tory or the opposition alone. Increasing overseas competition—no action plan here at all except that our minister's actually going there to create more business opportunity for China; labour costs and the lack of skilled labour.

A lot of these plans, as in most of the Liberal plans, are post-dated cheques. Some of this spending doesn't occur until after the next election. It's questionable. People say, "Why can't you support this government?" The devil here is in the detail. That's what is most troubling. Every time McGuinty says something, I get nervous.

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier):** The member for Beaches–East York, you have two minutes to respond.

**Mr. Michael Prue:** I would like to thank the members from Mississauga–Streetsville, Cambridge, Thunder Bay–Atikokan and Durham for their comments.

Just to deal with some of those comments, the member from Mississauga–Streetsville quite rightly pointed out that in Mississauga the monies the Liberal government has seen fit to give that municipality have been spent wisely. I would not have expected anything else from Her Worship Mayor McCallion and that council. Quite frankly, they are the ones who choose where the money goes. You give them the money. They spend it where they think it's correct.

I would also state the same to the member from Thunder Bay–Atikokan. I am not surprised that in small communities people look to money coming from Queen's Park as a godsend. They don't have the tax base. But at the same time, they are the ones who choose which road, which sewer, which bridge has to be repaired. They make that choice. The fact that you gave them the money is, I'm sure, fine. I think that every government should be giving money where that infrastructure can do the most good.

Both of you used the word "frivolous." I don't remember talking about municipalities being frivolous. I think I was talking more about your government being frivolous than them. As a former municipal councillor and mayor, I know that we valued every single cent. We made sure that every single cent was spent, and watched every penny with great care. That was easier in those days, when we still had pennies, than today, when we might not have them, but we watched them.

The member from Cambridge talked about long-term care. I commend him for his comments. In fact, there is a crisis in long-term care that this budget has not addressed. Six additional minutes is not going to do what is necessary. We need to get at least to the middle of the pack, at three hours. When we get there we can be the same as at least a couple of the provinces and a little better than some. Where we are now, we're way too low.

On the last, the member for Durham, I can only have time to thank him for his comments.

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier):** Thank you.

*Debate deemed adjourned.*

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier):** This House is adjourned until 6:45 of the clock.

*The House adjourned at 1758.*

*Evening meeting reported in volume B.*





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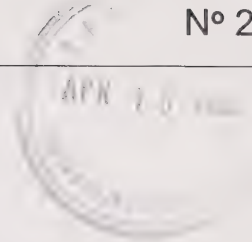
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of Ontario**

First Session, 39<sup>th</sup> Parliament

**Assemblée législative  
de l'Ontario**

Première session, 39<sup>e</sup> législature

**Official Report  
of Debates  
(Hansard)**

**Journal  
des débats  
(Hansard)**

**Monday 7 April 2008**

**Lundi 7 avril 2008**

Speaker  
Honourable Steve Peters

Président  
L'honorable Steve Peters

Clerk  
Deborah Deller

Greffière  
Deborah Deller



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## LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 7 April 2008

## ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 7 avril 2008

*The House met at 1845.*

### ORDERS OF THE DAY

#### INVESTING IN ONTARIO ACT, 2008

#### LOI DE 2008 PERMETTANT D'INVESTIR DANS L'ONTARIO

Mr. Gravelle, on behalf of Mr. Duncan, moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 35, An Act to authorize the Minister of Finance to make payments to eligible recipients out of money appropriated by the Legislature and to amend the Fiscal Transparency and Accountability Act, 2004, the Ministry of Treasury and Economics Act and the Treasury Board Act, 1991 / Projet de loi 35, Loi autorisant le ministre des Finances à faire des versements aux bénéficiaires admissibles sur les crédits affectés par la Législature et modifiant la Loi de 2004 sur la transparence et la responsabilité financières, la Loi sur le ministère du Trésor et de l'Économie et la Loi de 1991 sur le Conseil du Trésor.

**Hon. Michael Gravelle:** Speaker, I will pass this over to the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Finance, the member for Pickering—Scarborough East.

**Mr. Wayne Arthurs:** On March 18 of this year, our government introduced the Investing in Ontario Act, 2008. This bill, as it's appropriately titled, involves investing in Ontario, because it would allow us, as the government and as a Legislature, to further our balanced approach to paying down the debt while making critical investments in Ontario's economy.

This bill, if passed, would allow a portion of any unanticipated year-end provincial surpluses to address priority public needs, those being municipal infrastructure projects, as well as reducing the accumulated deficit. Currently, all year-end surpluses go directly toward debt reduction.

Since we took office in 2003, we've been able, through a prudent and measured fiscal approach, to substantially reduce the ratio of the provincial accumulated deficit to the gross domestic product. In 2003, the accumulated deficit was 25.2% of the province's GDP. Since then, we have been able to balance the budget that we inherited in a deficit fashion from the previous government and have reduced the provincial accumulated deficit. We've been able to make those payments despite the

fact that Ontario's economy is currently facing a number of challenges. These include a weakening US economy, the high value of the Canadian dollar, and the high price of oil.

But paying down the accumulated deficit is far from being the only method to ensure a prosperous future not just for our children, but for Ontarians from all walks of life who expect their government to make balanced moves to spur the Ontario economy. It is critical, now more than ever, to take every opportunity available for us to invest in Ontario.

Our government understands that communities are engines of economic growth and hotbeds of new innovation. For that reason, we are building on the progress we have already made in working with our partners, municipalities. The government has made historic investments in municipalities and municipal partnerships. This has meant ongoing and increasing funding support for municipal operating costs. It means the uploading of costs that previous governments had downloaded and supporting municipal capital needs.

I would like to remind members of this Legislature what our government has accomplished in this new era of partnerships with municipalities. Since 2003, our government has more than doubled its support to municipal operating budgets. In 2008, this will amount to \$2.2 billion in ongoing operating support to our municipal partners.

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The OMPF, or Ontario municipal partnership fund, assists municipalities with their social program costs. It includes equalization measures, addresses challenges faced by northern and rural municipalities, and responds to policing costs in rural communities. In 2008, this particular fund will transfer \$870 million—41%, or \$252 million, more than in 2004.

Members of this Legislature will recall that it is our government which has made available two cents per litre of the provincial gas tax to municipalities on an annual basis to improve and enhanced municipal transit. In 2008, some \$314 million is being distributed to transit systems that provide services to 108 different communities across this province. By 2010, a total of more than \$1.6 billion will have been distributed to municipalities since the program began.

Just another example of our commitment to municipalities is that in 2007 the province's share of public health funding stood at 50%. It was increased to 75% at that point in time from its previous level in 2004. Also,



since 2006 the government has made an additional investment in land ambulance services of just over \$300 million, meeting the commitment of moving to a 50-50 funding relationship of existing levels of land ambulance services.

Our government is phasing out the greater Toronto area pooling, which will eliminate a \$200-million burden from the municipal property tax bases of contributing GTA municipalities. Under this plan, we are uploading responsibility for social assistance and social housing costs currently funded under this particular program.

Furthermore, in August 2007, the Premier announced an unprecedented upload of social program costs. Our government decided to upload the municipal share of the costs for the Ontario drug benefit program in January 2008, and will begin the uploading of Ontario disability support program payments in 2009. By the time this is fully implemented in 2011, the upload will save municipalities over \$900 million a year. As a result of these investments, by 2011 the government will have increased ongoing annual operating support to municipalities to \$2.8 billion, an increase of more than \$1.7 billion, or a 160% increase compared to the state of affairs in 2003.

This is not all, as we will continue to work through the provincial-municipal review process to put our cities and towns on a firm financial footing. However, a firm financial footing that allows municipalities to face their operational costs doesn't mean that infrastructure investments have all been taken care of, or can be taken for granted. For this reason, we have to continue investing in our municipal infrastructure if we want to maintain our competitive advantage. This is why we have introduced the Investing in Ontario Act, 2008. If the proposed legislation is enacted, we would use the regulation-making authority in the proposed act to direct the available portion of any year-end surplus in 2007-08 to municipalities for infrastructure priorities.

We believe this is a balanced way to reduce the provincial debt, as well as better help municipalities to address their very real capital needs. Let me explain what we will provide under the regulations that we'll put in place if the proposed legislation is in fact enacted. If the province were to achieve a surplus in the 2007-08 year in excess of \$800 million, the first \$600 million would be used to reduce the province's accumulated financial deficit and the remaining amount would be provided to municipalities for capital purposes. This means that municipalities could receive a minimum of \$200 million in additional capital funding—funding above and beyond the investments and support the province already provides.

Until the public accounts are finalized this summer, the amount of any surplus available to municipalities will not be known. But what we know is that we're on track for a surplus. What we're doing with this proposed legislation is making sure we take every opportunity available to invest in Ontario. Through this initiative, we are demonstrating our government's commitment to treating municipalities as true partners in building a stronger and

better Ontario. Municipalities would have the flexibility to use the funding for their own capital priorities, whether it's to improve roads and bridges, expand transit or upgrade social housing. To ensure that available funds are distributed in a fair and transparent manner, we're proposing to distribute funding to all municipalities on the basis of population. Let us be clear: We will have accountability provisions in place consistent with the province's new transfer payment directives. There would be report-backs on how the funds were used, we would have the right to independent verification or audit, and we would have the right to recover funds if not used for capital purposes.

We know that investing in municipal infrastructure not only addresses the capital needs of our communities, but also creates more jobs in the short term and prosperity in the long run.

We heard loud and clear from our municipal partners that they support this proposed act and appreciate what it can achieve. Let me remind members of this Legislature what some of our leaders in the GTA, those municipal officials, have said about the bill.

Toronto's budget chief, Shelley Carroll, said that the city's transit commission would rightfully line up for a share of any cash infusion for capital projects. She said, "The announcement today means that our overall five-year plan in terms of capital is now much more sound," whereas Mississauga Mayor Hazel McCallion said the change could reduce the city's proposed infrastructure surcharge on property taxes set to take effect this year. "This is just great," she said. "The province has done exactly what we've asked them to do." We've listened to municipal officials because investing in municipal infrastructure is the appropriate thing for us to do.

To those who would still ask themselves, "Why does the province need to continue investing in municipal infrastructure?" I would say that there is a very compelling reason why we have to carry out this particular strategy. It is quite simple: Infrastructure investments create jobs, improve access to markets and support business investment. They deliver immediate benefits through job creation and form the foundation of long-term economic growth, as modern infrastructure is a major factor in attracting private investment and world-class businesses. That's why we need first-rate municipal roads and bridges, water treatment plants, sewage treatment plants, waste water systems, public transit, regional transportation infrastructure and general community facilities.

Municipal roads and bridges are essential components of Ontario's transportation network as they connect communities and provide access to economic opportunities. Effective and expanded public transit reduces traffic congestion and makes it easier and faster to move people and goods, cuts smog and provides cleaner air to breathe, helps reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and supports sustainable urban development, which leads to stronger communities and a higher quality of life. For Ontario to be competitive in the global economy and achieve its full potential, it must have modern infrastruc-



ture that makes businesses productive, helps move people and goods faster, and contributes to a high quality of life for all Ontarians. That's why investing in Ontario infrastructure is part of Ontario's five-point economic plan.

Let me just recall our recent accomplishments.

In our 2008 budget, a new \$400-million municipal roads and bridges fund will help municipalities invest in critical infrastructure projects across the province. Funding will be distributed to municipalities, in this instance outside Toronto, based on their share of Ontario's road network in relation to population. This new investment builds on the success of a similar investment that was announced in the 2006 budget.

Furthermore, we're investing \$450 million in the 2007-08 year in the municipal infrastructure investment initiative, the combined total of \$300 million which was announced in the fall economic statement and \$150 million announced at the 2008 Ontario Good Roads Association and Rural Ontario Municipal Association annual conference. These investments will help communities across the province improve their infrastructure, including roads, bridges, water, waste water and community facilities.

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We're also helping municipalities invest in local roadways designated as connecting links, which are specifically designated municipal roads that connect to provincial highways. In 2006-07, this program invested \$16 million to fund 37 connecting links. In the 2007 budget, we announced an additional one-time investment of \$25 million to assist with municipal road improvements. In this budget, in 2008, the province is investing an additional \$16 million to fund some 35 connecting link projects. These are first-rate investments to help connect municipal roads to provincial highways.

But this isn't all that's being done on that front. In our budget we made the commitment to provide funding for all of the Metrolinx recommended quick-win projects. With the transit commitments in this budget, the province will have funded one third of the cost of 360 new subway cars for the TTC and the infrastructure needed to improve capacity on the Yonge subway. Our government, in co-operation with municipalities, continues to call on the federal government to invest in Ontario's infrastructure, specifically the government's \$17.5-billion Move Ontario 2020 plan, the Windsor border, the Ontario-Quebec Continental Gateway and Trade Corridor and strong community infrastructure.

Our government is following our five-point economic plan endorsed by Ontarians in the fall of 2007. Let me just recall for a moment or so what this plan entails. It includes major investment in the education and skills of our people. It's keeping our taxes competitive. This initiative includes phasing out the capital tax and supporting innovation and the good high-paying jobs of the future through, for example, the new \$165-million Ontario venture capital fund. It involves accelerating the largest investment in the province's infrastructure in 50 years, including Move Ontario 2020, an historic expansion of

public transit. Finally, it forms key partnerships such as those formed through the automotive investment strategy, which is helping to leverage more than \$7 billion in new auto investment, and the new Next Generation of Jobs Fund, which will create new, high-paying jobs by developing new, clean and green technologies.

This piece of legislation, as proposed in the Investing in Ontario Act, 2008, will continue to build on our partnership and our relationship with municipalities, recognizing their infrastructure needs and recognizing the importance of infrastructure to the future of this province.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath):** Questions and comments?

**Mr. Norm Miller:** I don't often agree with the Toronto Star, but today I must admit I do agree. It's talking about this bill, Bill 35, the Investing in Ontario Act, 2008. What does the Toronto Star say today? "Duncan's bill is flawed." "Instead, the bill provides that payments may be made to an 'eligible recipient,'"—which the member for Pickering-Scarborough East just talked about—"defined only as an entity 'that does not carry on activities for the purpose of gain or profit'—'on such terms and conditions as the minister considers advisable.' The bill leaves it up to cabinet to decide who is eligible, how the money can be spent, and how payments are to be calculated." So I think we should rename this bill the Legalized Slush Fund Act, 2008, because this bill is legalizing the practice that this government has brought into effect, of deciding who and what should get money.

But even looking at the design of the bill—assuming that some of the money will go to municipalities—they've said "over \$800 million in unanticipated surplus" would go to municipalities. First of all, this government's pretty good at blowing any additional money this year. They managed to spend a \$5-billion unanticipated surplus pretty quickly. But also, for this year, the financial year we've started now, they're planning on a \$600-million surplus. So there will be no money this year—if they're on budget—going towards municipalities, cricket clubs or whatever else.

Sorry, \$600 million was the plan for the year we just finished. Now the plan is zero surplus. So there will be no money going out this year. It seems to me that this bill is really about just trying to garner favour with municipalities and leading them to think they might get something which they probably will not see.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath):** Member for Beaches-East York.

**Mr. Michael Prue:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. It is a pleasure to see you there in the chair.

My colleague from Pickering-Scarborough East talked about 2007-08 monies going to municipalities, that it's all going to be contained in the regulations, and then went on to give some wonderful quotes from the mayor of Mississauga and a councillor from the city of Toronto which both predated the actual filing of the bill. In part, I want to tell the member from Pickering-Scarborough East that I've got a copy of Bill 35, and I'm sure he's had an opportunity to read it as well, and not once in the bill



is the word “municipality” mentioned. Not once in the bill is there any mention of a surplus of any size. Not once in the bill does it mention infrastructure or the payment of money for infrastructure. In fact, the bill accounts for eligible recipients.

I want to speak, but if he would like to address these issues, why, if this bill is going to do so much for municipalities, are they never mentioned? Why, if it's going to do so much for infrastructure, is it never mentioned? Why is the bill purposely and carefully crafted so that this government can give the money literally to anyone it wants to give the money to?

This is a horrendous bill, and I'm going have an opportunity to speak to it later. But as I listened to the member from Pickering–Scarborough East, he waxed eloquently but left out all of the details of what is contained in the body of the bill and spoke only about that press conference, where the people in the room were very much in the dark, the same as members of this Legislature and everyone save and except possibly the Minister of Finance. I'm hoping, in his two-minute rebuttal, he can explain how this bill bears very little resemblance to the promises made that day.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath):** Questions and comments? The member for Brant.

*Interjection.*

**Mr. Dave Levac:** You do the second one. We're so excited, Speaker, that we both wanted to speak to defend the member from Ajax–Pickering—it's not Ajax anymore.

**Mr. Wayne Arthurs:** Pickering–Scarborough East.

**Mr. Dave Levac:** Pickering–Scarborough East.

My seatmate makes some good points. What I want to really bring to the attention of the Legislature, which is rather interesting, is that you're going to hear both of the oppositions' members say all kinds of things about what the bill isn't. The two things they do not want to tell you, though, are that this is an extra tool for the municipalities and one more way in which this government has indicated its willingness to be a partner.

Let me ask them quite clearly: If this bill passes and becomes the way in which we make sure municipalities get that extra money that is in surplus—if it happens in anyone's budget, will they repeal that law? Will they tell the municipalities that, “When there is extra surplus money, you will not get that money for your infrastructure?” Let me hear them stand up and say that in their two minutes. They're not going to say that. They're not going to do that because they're the ones who downloaded all the responsibilities to the municipalities in the first place.

The difficulty here is understanding that when they put this thing together when they were in the government, they were the ones who burdened the municipalities with all of these terrible things they had to get out of. Every bill that we've passed in this Legislature since 2003 has been a way to form partnerships with the municipalities and to assist the municipalities.

Yes, read the quotes. They do talk about a new era, a new-found era from when this government has decided to

work in partnership with the municipalities. What does this translate to, specifically? Better transit that we all get to benefit from; connectedness to the communities, which we all get to do. Inside of regulation, what you're going to see is the opportunity for us to work with the municipalities to ensure they—this is talking about trust. We are going to trust the municipalities to put the money where they need it the most. That's what this is about.

**Ms. Sylvia Jones:** I'm pleased to rise this evening to talk about Bill 35. I notice the words “fiscal transparency” are in the long title of the act. I have difficulty with the word “transparency” when there is no reference in the bill to transferring that money to the municipalities. There's no reference in that bill to having transparency for the electors to see where you're going to put this money. The member from Brant references the fact that municipal partners—and they use those words, advisedly, a lot—were pleased to hear that the surplus would be transferred to the municipalities.

The problem is that many of those quotes that he's referencing happened a week before the budget, when they thought they were actually going to see some of this surplus. We now have a situation where the week before the budget was introduced, probably at the printer, they already knew that there wasn't going to be sufficient surplus to transfer any money to the municipalities, even if they chose to do it. I think what we're seeing here is an opportunity for the governing Liberals to choose their pet projects, to choose their pet ridings and funnel money in where they see they need a few more votes or a few more positive articles in the press. It's unfortunate that the word “transparency” has been used in a bill that in fact closes up the opportunity for people to see where that year-end surplus—if there is going to be one—is going. I think it's an unfortunate way to govern and an unfortunate way to deal with our municipal partners.

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**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath):** Response?

**Mr. Wayne Arthurs:** I appreciate the comments by members from Muskoka–Parry Sound, Beaches–East York, Brant and Dufferin–Caledon.

What I didn't hear from around the House was anyone objecting to investments in municipal infrastructure, which is really quite positive. Now, there may be various commentary on transparency or whether the bill specifically speaks to municipalities by word or whether we might spend the money on debt reduction beyond municipalities. Generally, though, no one was really objecting to what the intent is—and that's a recognition of the very real need that municipalities have, one we've been addressing since we came to office, one we addressed through infrastructure dollars when we had some capacity in 2006 on a municipal infrastructure program so well received then. Many of us—most of us, probably—have been in our ridings over the past couple of weeks doing announcements and/or hearing from our municipal partners about the monies that have recently flowed through the budget process, apart from our year-end,



apart from the monies that might be available at the end of this fiscal year when all of the numbers are in, which this bill attests to. I heard nothing but positive comments from the municipal partners I spoke with, regionally and locally, about what we managed to do over the past three, four or five years compared to what they had going on before that and what they anticipate is going to happen. They understand that we are constrained by the economy. If the economy is good, then they should share in that. If we do well, they should do well. If the province isn't doing quite as well, they understand that there won't be quite as much money to flow to them. But what's important for them is to have partners and know that those partners are going to work with them when the opportunity arises, that we're going to be there with them in the good times and we're going to support them even when times aren't so good.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath):** Further debate?

**Mr. John O'Toole:** It's a pleasure, first of all, to recognize that my good friend and the finance critic for the opposition, the member from Niagara West—Glanbrook, Tim Hudak, would have done a much more thorough review. But he is watching tonight and will comment in the coming days with respect to Bill 35.

My role here tonight is to make this understandable for the ordinary person in Ontario. That really is a good place to start. The member from Niagara West—Glanbrook has given me the privilege of attending a briefing last week which he arranged. We had the opportunity to talk to ministry people. I give them full credit and thanks for taking the time. But I left that briefing by the ministry people not fully reassured that there was a plan here. That's very troubling, because this is a complete shift.

I'm going to go over—Bill 35 is a very small bill. In fact, I think it's important for the members of the public who are, hopefully, listening tonight—there would be many people in nursing homes and in their rocking chairs listening. This is actually only three pages. In fact, it's in two languages, so it's only a page and a half. This is a profoundly important bill. What it does is it allows the McGuinty government to take all the money that's extra, depending on how your accounting works, and flush it out at the end of the year. That's really what it does. I'm going to keep to the record here, Madam Speaker—and congratulations, you look very dignified in the chair there. I'm going to read the preamble for the public. The preamble of the bill, in this one-and-a-half-page bill which restructures Ontario and allows the Liberals to just give your money away, with no strings attached, more or less, says:

"The Investment Ontario Act, 2008 authorizes the Minister of Finance to make payments out of money appropriated by the Legislature"—that's the McGuinty government—"to certain persons and entities that do not carry on their activities for the purpose of gain or profit."

There's no Liberal that makes a profit; that's the first assumption you have to make. They're going to spend,

tax and spend. That's their whole ideology. The Liberals' moniker and their traditions have been two predictable outcomes: tax and spend. You don't have to look very far. You don't have to look to the federal government. You can look back to David Peterson, and some of the things I'll say in the future will account for how we got into this mess that we're in, this precipitous mess, because of Dalton's current decisions.

This preamble goes on to say, "The total payments made under the new act in each fiscal year shall not exceed the lesser of"—the wording is a bit technical, but all of us have to understand and abide by it, with the exception of Dalton:

"(a) the amount appropriated by the Legislature"—when they set up a rule, there's an account called "a" and it will be an amount apportioned by the Legislature through regulations, because we don't know what the regulations are now—"and

"(b) the amount that would otherwise be the annual surplus for the fiscal year less the prescribed amount, if any, of that surplus allocated to the reduction of the accumulated deficit"—in other words, the debt.

Normally today, any surplus that is sort of an unplanned outcome of good economic times—which we've seen the last of—would be allocated automatically through legislation to pay off the mortgage, the accumulated debt. That is the rule today. What this bill does is change forever the discipline of paying off your bills. You can just stack up the debt as long as you want, because the accumulated debt is basically future taxes. In the future, to pay off the debt—it's \$160-some-billion now in Ontario—you either have to cut services, raise the efficiency in the delivery of public service, thereby saving money, or increase taxes. Those are the choices. Increasing taxes means your children are going to pay off the debt in the inordinate amount of expenditures they're incurring.

The preamble goes on, "The new act authorizes the Minister of Finance to determine the terms and conditions on which payments may be made." So they're fully in charge.

"The Lieutenant Governor in Council is authorized to prescribe by regulation the recipients"—this is important—"to whom payment may be made." When you say recipients, that could be the cricket club or it could be some friend. This is what troubles us. We saw what happened when, with all due respect, Michael Colle had a bit of money that they gave him to give out before an election, which is just completely unacceptable. There were really no strings attached. It ended up that people who didn't apply got money, people didn't know the rules, they were trying to defend it, and finally he had to resign. That's got to be an admission of some—I'm sure that Dalton was pressuring Mr. Colle. I know the member. He's an honourable fellow, but the cabinet kind of rules the day in the way it was played. They gave out some \$30 million that was difficult to track as to who applied for what and why they got it. Some got money who didn't apply for it.



This is saying—I'm going to repeat—"The Lieutenant Governor in Council is authorized to prescribe by regulation the recipients to whom payment may be made, the purposes for which payments may be made, the method of and basis for calculating the payments, the activities in which the Minister of Finance may engage"—activities in which the Minister of Finance may engage; this is suspicious too—"in furtherance of the purposes of this act"—in other words, they're going to talk to the various friends or associates one way or another—"and the amount of surplus, if any." They can even change this level of surplus. My understanding of Bill 35—the general media was that it was anything in excess of \$600 million at the end of a fiscal year. They were saying there would be \$800 million. That meant that \$200 million would be spent as the cabinet saw fit under whatever the rules happen to be, the cricket club or what have you. It says here that the amount is not specified in this bill, so we've yet to see the details.

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So we're discussing—when you look to the current thing, the only thing you have to go on is past behaviour. Past behaviour is a good predictor of future behaviour. What is the past behaviour? Lottogate is one of them. In Ottawa we have the ad scandal, the Gomery issue. So that's kind of how they've been operating: in an environment where it's almost like they're buying votes, or they're actually getting close to encouraging voters to vote for them because of the recent donations to various groups.

I'm going to stick to the script here because this gets a bit touchy: "... the Minister of Finance may engage in furtherance of the purposes of this act;" in "the amount, if any, of the surplus for a fiscal year to be allocated to the reduction of the accumulated deficit," of the province's accumulated deficit.

That's just the preamble of the bill. It's not that long, and it defines a few things under the definitions section. It defines "eligible recipient," which I think is important: Who can get this money, the surplus at the end of the year, this unknown, unpredictable surplus. It means "a person or entity, other than an individual but including a partnership whose members may be individuals, that does not carry on activities for the purpose of gain or profit." It could be a club, a polo club or some other club, a cricket club. It could be. There's nothing in this bill that reassures me, and this is troubling.

Right now—giving you a bit of context for my troubling comments here—when I talk to constituents, more recently it's mainly because their municipal tax bill has gone up in the order of 5% or more, locally and regionally. Persons on fixed incomes—seniors and others—are troubled. They're normally not given to complaining. But they are saying, "When is this going to stop?" I tell them, "It stops when people start yelling and show up at their door, protesting, when they are upset." That's when this will stop. It shows up when—you get the government you deserve.

The eligible recipients—you've got to read between the lines a bit here.

"Authorized payments

"2(1) The Minister of Finance may, out of money appropriated therefor by the Legislature and in accordance with this act and the regulations, make payments in respect of a fiscal year beginning on or after April 1."

That's why we saw all this money that was flushed out in the budget there. Over \$1 billion was flushed out in the budget really quickly. Much of this money—the members themselves didn't know and the municipalities didn't know. Of course they're happy for it. As the member from Beaches–East York said, when he was mayor of East York, they were happy to get the money. We met with the wards in eastern Ontario during the Ontario Good Roads Association-ROMA convention this winter. They told us that whenever they got this last-minute money, they were happy to receive it. So I understand the politics of that. Do you understand?

What municipalities want, and I'm diverging a bit from the bill here: Municipalities told us, and they've said repeatedly that AMO, the Association of Municipalities, and ROMA, the Rural Ontario Municipal Association, have said that they want predictable, stable funding.

In fact this past Friday, I along with other Durham MPPs—normally Wayne Arthurs appears, but he was probably making a budget speech, a post-budget breakfast speech, somewhere on behalf of the minister, I'm sure. All the mayors and the regional chair for Durham were there. We had a good roundtable discussion on issues that affect all of us—we live there—and it's non-partisan, I would say respectfully. It is well conducted by Roger Anderson.

Out of courtesy, I should mention the mayor of Ajax, Steve Parish. I served on regional council with Steve. He's now the mayor. Larry O'Connor is the mayor of Brock, and our member from the city of Kawartha Lakes, Laurie Scott, works in that area. Jim Abernethy, the mayor of Clarington, was there, as well as John Gray, the mayor of the city of Oshawa, and Dave Ryan, the mayor of Pickering, who's a good friend of the member for Pickering–Ajax. Marilyn Pearce, from the township of Scugog, was there as well, and I sat beside her—she's a very thorough mayor—and Bob Shepherd, who's the mayor of Uxbridge—new but experienced and brings a very decent, respectful attitude—and Mayor Pat Perkins, who's the new mayor of Whitby but has served for a number of years.

So there are seven municipalities, and they all agree. I can say without putting words in their mouths that they all want stable, predictable funding to deal with infrastructure, planning and organizing the distribution of funds mostly in the capital nature. That's what they want. This politicization of in-year so-called funding, one time funding, what actually could that achieve? In your household what you'd do with that is you'd buy a flat-screen television or some extraordinary expenditure that you hadn't planned for. This bill is not structured in a way



that allows municipalities at upper and lower tiers to execute their business the way they should.

Section 3 is quite interesting. Section 3 is the only substantive section in it, but it doesn't tell you anything either. The regulation says, "The Lieutenant Governor in Council"—now, there you are—this arm's-length, sort of secret process can make the regulations. These people are appointed basically by Dalton McGuinty. They make regulations prescribing eligible recipients, the class of eligible recipients, the prescription for the purpose for which payments may be made under the act, like, "You've got to tell me about what you're doing."

Now, this is a Premier who ran on transparency and accountability. This is anything but that. This is like trying to make a solid piece of information out of gas. It's sort of getting away on you as you're looking at it. It's like dealing in a fog. It's troubling. It says, "prescribing the method of and the basis for calculating payments to be made under this act." And clause (d) says, "prescribing activities in which the Minister of Finance may engage in furtherance of the purposes of this act." In clause (e): "prescribing, for the purposes of the definition of 'B' in subsection 2(2), the amount, if any, of the surplus for a fiscal year to be allocated to the reduction of the accumulated deficit"—see, there's the amount. They said there's \$600 million out there; that's not in here. It says it's prescribing the allocation of "the reduction of the accumulated deficit"—the debt—"shown in the province's consolidated financial statements for the fiscal year."

Then it has a section here, subsection 3(2): "Retroactive regulations"

"A regulation is, if it so provides, effective with reference to a period before it is filed." So they can do it retroactively.

There are a couple of other sections, but they are not that large, and they mostly refer to acts that Bill 35 is amending. So you can see that this is not much of a disclosure bill here, because we're guessing. So where do you go from the idea of giving out money at the end of a fiscal year? There is a process where during the fiscal year there are mid-term estimates—I think they are provided some time in August or September. These estimates are done by the economists who forecast the revenues and expenditures to date.

Now, if you look at the current budget—and even that in itself is somewhat suspect. If you look, and I'm looking here—and I encourage the listeners: If you need to, you can log on to the Ontario government website. But there are really a couple of pages here that you must look at. Page 18 and page 19 kind of give you the total revenue picture. This is 18 and this is 19. Page 19 is the total expenditure side. On the expenditure side, they do show that they have a bit of a reserve fund. I'm troubled. It's \$750 million. Do you know what I think could happen? If they get into trouble, the economy is a bit shaky, I don't know who could get that money. Do you understand?

There are some questions that need to be asked, and that's the role of our leader, John Tory, and Bob Runciman as the House leader: to call on how this money is being spent. To me, the people I talked about, the seniors, the fixed-income people—there is a surplus. This means they are paying too much tax. That means somebody, down the line, is being—not just the health tax. I don't want to talk about Bill 44, the provincial budget bill. I am for a moment. I'm just going to diverge from my notes here, because I'm well prepared for this discussion tonight.

1930

In the budget there's one thing: They're going to give senior citizens \$250 if they qualify under certain thresholds of income.

*Applause.*

**Mr. John O'Toole:** The Liberals are applauding because they know that what that does is it actually gives them some of their health tax back. That's all it does. It's arcane. Dalton figures, "Just give it to them," because they're mad at him. He knows they're mad. They are paying more for drugs. They're waiting in waiting rooms. There are no doctors. They haven't solved any problems. They're paying another \$2.5 billion in health tax, and you ask yourself, while you're waiting in the emergency room, "Is it any better?" No, it's worse.

**Mr. Bill Murdoch:** Long-term care.

**Mr. John O'Toole:** Long-term care.

The whole system is slowly crumbling. In fact, I spoke with the executive director of the Markham Stouffville Hospital tonight and I'm asking—the Minister of Health is here. He's a fairly decent hockey player, but to him as the Minister of Health, I want to say this, from the Central LHIN. They need money to cover the Uxbridge Cottage Hospital on emergency. You've committed to it. I know that you have health care as the number one priority, but—

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath):** I would ask the member to get back to the bill that we're debating in the House this evening.

**Mr. John O'Toole:** It is all tied together, because it's the uncertainty of the numbers themselves. If you look at it, Madam Speaker—I'll get one of the people to bring it up to you, because it's in here. There's normally an amount identified in expenditures as a contingency fund. That contingency fund deals with things like ice storms etc. I don't see that here. I see it spelled out in different ways, but overall spending between 2006-07 and 2007-08 on the expenditure side has gone from \$88 billion to \$96 billion. How can they sustain those billions of dollars? If the economy is going a bit south—and I'm going to talk about that. My biggest concern, the underlying concern here, is that in these difficult economic times, the RBC and others have already contradicted the forecast numbers in this with the forecast growth, the 1.1% to 1.2% growth. Even more recently, today, they're down below 1%.

What does that all mean to the ordinary person like myself who pays taxes? I've taken the time and the pri-



vilage of paying attention. For every point that the GDP, this gross domestic product, or the productivity measurement—this is something worth knowing for all members, especially the new members—goes up, the province of Ontario receives between \$600 million and \$800 million extra revenue. If it goes down a point, you lose the \$600 million to \$800 million in revenue, plus your expenditures go up. So if the economy drops by a point, the net result is probably a billion dollars. This is a bump in the road.

The economists are now talking—and I have some of these numbers in front of me, with your indulgence—about these kinds of problems. In fact, the Canadian Labour Congress and others are saying it. If we want to predict the future with any degree of certainty, the best predictor of future behaviour is past behaviour. What have they done in the past? What did David Peterson do? He spent us into oblivion is what he did. He set up Bob Rae for a complete disaster. Bob Rae didn't cause the social contract. In all fairness, it was caused by David Peterson. He was off at Meech Lake spending money like a sailor who hadn't been off ship for some months. There are other terms for that.

Here's what it says: "25,000 Jobs Lost in Ontario in March." This is the future. Without being a dire pessimist here, we've got to deal with reality. It's Dalton McGuinty's responsibility. After four years, he's got to assume some responsibility. He could blame Sir John A. Macdonald for some of the problems if he wishes, and he probably will. "Canada's red-hot labour market caught a chill from US recessionary winds in March as the spreading economic gloom sliced 47,000 full-time jobs from the payrolls in manufacturing-heavy Ontario and Quebec." This is the Toronto Star, the labour-friendly briefing notes—the Toronto Star. That's what it says. I'm not making this up. It goes on here to say, "But all those gains and more were part-time jobs as Canada actually lost 19,600 full-time positions, while part-time employment jumped"—so they're losing full-time jobs and they're gaining part-time jobs, which kind of obscures the numbers a bit.

I'm going to be honest here and say, "And the news was far worse in the export-oriented economies of Ontario and Quebec...." If you look at the gross numbers, the aggregate numbers across Canada, it doesn't look so bad. But if you look at Ontario, this is where the job shedding has occurred. That's what happened to John Gray during the last recession in the early 1990s. It collapsed. Ontario was first into the tank and last out of the tank. I was chair of the budget process in my municipality at that time. I met with Floyd Laughren and Ed Philip, and they were pulling every straw out of every hat that they could find to stop the hemorrhaging. Dalton hasn't taken any of the advice of our federal finance minister, Jim Flaherty, to be competitive with other provinces, to use the tools he has at his disposal. No; he has ignored that. What he has in Bill 35 is the slush fund, the lottery giveaway. Buy a 6/49 ticket; that's his solution. There's no plan here. There's no plan.

In fact, our critic, Jim Wilson, made the other day what I thought—he was talking about the exodus of 77,000 people—

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath):** Excuse me. I would ask the member to try to address other members of the chamber by their ridings.

**Mr. John O'Toole:** Most people know Jim Wilson, but I'll get his riding name here: Simcoe-Grey. He's an excellent member, a former Minister of Health, and knows of what he speaks. He was doing a question to the minister for which he got completely unsatisfactory answers. He said, "It's sort of like 'Go west, young man'; 70,000 young people"—mainly—"have gone west, to Saskatchewan and Alberta and BC." Why? We're going to spend \$1.5 billion retraining people for jobs. The key is, I want to hear from Sandra Pupatello—what's her ministry? I shouldn't be using her name.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath):** Minister of Economic Development and Trade.

**Mr. John O'Toole:** I shouldn't be using her name. I'll try to tidy up my speech here. She's the Deputy Premier—no, that's George. Minister of Economic Development? Anything but. Windsor's in total, complete collapse, almost.

**Mr. Bill Murdoch:** She's a Windsor girl.

**Mr. John O'Toole:** Yes, she's from Windsor. Their unemployment rate is the highest in Canada. And where is she going? She's going to China to get more jobs for Wal-Mart or something. I have no idea why she's going.

The member from Simcoe-Grey asked the question, and there was the inadequate response, and he said clearly that that was encouraging people—indirectly, I'm sure—to go west.

Here we are with one of the greatest educational systems, thanks, for the most part, to the work that was done by Mike Harris and Ernie Eves—the number of post-secondary students in our universities and colleges was because of that double-cohort investment that we made. Those people, unfortunately, are graduating with no jobs. Now they're going to spend \$1.5 billion. Graduating to do what? What's the plan?

As the member from the third party said today, they're shedding manufacturing jobs; even Quebec has a plan. There's no plan. There's sort of this lottery-style Bill 35, write the cheque to somebody that you hope—look, they did it the other day here. There was an article in the paper. I'll get to it because I have a few minutes left to speak. They gave some money to, I believe it was a chocolate factory, and now the chocolate factory has a recall. It was a considerable amount of money. I'll get the quote out.

I'm just going to stick with a few of the comments here. "Certainly no disaster," said CIBC senior economist Avery Shenfeld. "But central Canada did see some impacts of the weakening in the US, and that could be the start of a trend." That's a quote.

"There were new indications" yesterday "that the US had slipped into a mild recession, and the slump is far from over. US employers reported slashing 80,000 pay-



roll jobs in March, the most in five years and the third straight month of losses.

"Shenfeld said that was indicative of a mild recession. 'If we were to see a deeper recession, you'd be losing 200,000 jobs a month,' he said.

"Both employment reports were in line with market expectations, as well as cautionary statements issued by Federal Reserve chairman Ben Bernanke and Bank of Canada senior deputy Paul Jenkins earlier this week.

"TD Bank economist Derek Burleton said he expects Canada's job market will likely soften further ... although he said the much slower pace of retreat than that in the US...."

"Citing the American slump, the Royal Bank on Thursday downgraded Canada's economic growth forecast to 1.6 % in 2008 and said Ontario and Quebec would be the hardest hit because of their dependence on exports to the US."

**1940**

Now, there's what I said. That GDP decline is being forecast. If that's done three times, you're technically and academically in a recession. There are two or three different measurements. One of them is interest rates, one is jobs, and one is just growth in the economy.

"But"—this goes on—"the Canadian Labour Congress saw more red than the bank economists, particularly in the continued bleeding of manufacturing jobs, and called for"—Ottawa—"to launch a job creation strategy to mitigate the impact of the US recession." That's basically what the federal finance minister is trying to do with Mr. McGuinty: come up with a strategy, working with the stakeholders in manufacturing. You understand, Hamilton is your riding, and that area is hard hit, as are other areas; Windsor, as well as Oshawa and Durham ridings, have a great dependency on the auto sector.

These are high-paying, good, skilled jobs. If they're lost, we could spend a lot more just trying to get them back. We should probably spend a few dollars to try and save them. There are countries that don't have the trade discipline that Canada has—allowing foreign manufacturing products in here. A member from the NDP caucus had this on the busing—Monsieur Bisson, just a week or so ago in private members', was talking about the same thing: having the right tax strategy to secure a certainty of employment. There's nothing wrong with that. In fact, government money should have strings attached to make sure there are job security provisions in those grants.

I'm just going to clear up here. It says, "'Today's labour force numbers give clear evidence that the US recession is now spilling over into Canada, especially in Ontario, Quebec and the Maritimes,' said economist Andrew Jackson, noting that almost all the job gains came in Alberta and BC." This is similar to the member for Bruce-Grey—Go west, young person. "Go west young man," but it's meant in the general sense.

Here's what our reaction, unfortunately, has been. Again, these are strictly from the newspapers today. This is not something that I've been hoarding to myself. This a commentary, again from the Toronto Star, widely known

as the Liberal briefing notes. This is generally what we understand it to be. They write, it and the ministers use it every day in the House here. So, after 10 or 15 years, we get kind of used to it.

This is what the Toronto Star says today, on page A20. It's talking about the good work that John Tory and Bob Runciman are doing. It really is quite complimentary. I'm a bit surprised the Toronto Star would go that far. They were in Hamilton, and Premier McGuinty—with all due respect, he is the Premier. The people made a mistake, but he is the Premier. Here's what it says: "Ontarians should 'steel' themselves for hard"—what's this "steel" stuff? I know it's steel town, but he could be direct with people instead of using this code language. Steel as in s-t-e-e-l—two e's, as opposed to the other one. I thought he was trying to say the only way to get along is to steal the bread or something. I'm not sure.

But, "'steel' themselves for hard times because there are no magic solutions for reversing the economic downturn." There's no solution. He's given up. The Premier of Ontario says it right here. He's given up. There's "no magic solution." How about being tax competitive with other jurisdictions as a start to protect those high-paying skilled jobs in a sector that's built this province, built Hamilton, built southern Ontario, with affordable energy and good, skilled manufacturing jobs?

"The warning came as Statistics Canada reported Ontario lost 25,000 full-time jobs in March as the unemployment rate rose to 6.4 % from 6.1 % in February.

"We're going to continue to go through some challenging times...." This is quoting the Premier, the leader, the person with the plan book in his back pocket.

**Mr. Bill Murdoch:** There's no plan?

**Mr. John O'Toole:** I'm not sure there is a plan here, and this is what's so discouraging. To be here, representing my riding of Durham, which is dependent on a government that's fair-minded, not looking at how many Liberals or how many Conservatives. They're working with the leadership; they're trying to do the right thing for the sector, whether it's Hamilton, London, Durham, Ottawa, Sudbury or Sault Ste. Marie. They're working with the sectors or the regions of the province as a leader with a plan. I see nothing of the sort here. I see statements like, "Prepare," "Batten down the hatches," and that kind of stuff—terrible. "I'm sure those Ontario families and businesses who are losing jobs, losing ground and losing hope will find the Premier's advice to 'steel themselves' very reassuring." That was our leader, John Tory's, response. I think he must be eating those words today; he must be sorry he said them. He's probably sorry he went to Hamilton.

There are other signs—this is what's most troubling; there are so many signs. I just flipped through the clipings to prepare—unscripted, untested. Here's another headline: "BC Ruling Spells Trouble for Ontario Mining Industry." We saw the largest mining tax increase at the diamond mines, and that's what the headline says. It's right from the Toronto Star; you can read it for yourself.



Here's another one: "Talk about Teachers' Pension Plan is Predictably Vague". This is by an extremely good writer from the *Globe and Mail*, Murray Campbell; I think he does a great job. He's talking about a huge deficit in public sector pensions. In this particular section, he's responding to the Minister of Education's rather unscripted remark that they may have to claw back some of the benefits of the current teachers' pension plan agreement. They are talking about it; she admitted that. But then I think the Premier kind of tugged at her shoulder and said, "No. Oh, you're off script there a bit."

Here's what it says: "Education Minister Kathleen Wynne was not the model of precision this week when talking about the \$12.7-billion shortfall facing the Ontario Teachers' Pension Plan." Whoa, let me sit down here for a minute. The rich teachers' pension plan is \$12.7 billion—this is the richest pension plan in Canada.

*Interjection.*

**Mr. John O'Toole:** Listen up; can I have your attention here for a moment?

"Asked ... whether the early retirement provisions enjoyed by the province's teachers might have to be scrapped, she said, 'It's one of those things that the partners at the table have to talk about.'" That's a quote. Boy, will they be upset. With all the money they've spent on education to buy peace, it sort of reminds me of that British politician: "peace at any price." I think it was Neville Chamberlain who said that, wasn't it?

*Interjection.*

**Mr. John O'Toole:** Neville Chamberlain. Yes, exactly. It's tragic. Well, this is where we are today: peace at any price.

That ties in to Bill 35, because at the end of the year they could bail it out. Do you understand? That's what this fund is about. It's magically going around with a little spell, called Dalton's fountain pen and a cheque-book, and solving all the problems. It's scary. Actually, the more I get into this, the more troubled I get.

It says here: "The \$108-billion pension fund commissioned the survey and other studies last year after dealing with a 2005 shortfall of \$19 billion," in the Ontario Teachers' Pension Plan. Did you know—Madam Speaker, you probably know this, because you read a lot of material—that they've increased the teachers' contribution to the highest level permitted by law? I think it's over 10% of their—in fairness, the teachers are paying a lot. Hey, look, I'm not a teacher. I'm saying that they're paying an inordinate amount.

Once again, Dalton McGuinty has no plan. Even the most successful pension plan in Ontario is going south. Dalton McGuinty is the Premier; you can't blame Mike Harris for that one. The boat has turned around, I'm sorry. It's tragic. Do you know what I mean?

In all respect, our leader, Bob Runciman, discussed this with all members of the caucus and put forward a resolution that will be debated here—I think I'm in order to release this. It might be a bit confidential, but I'm going to read it. It's for debate this Wednesday. Stay

tuned. I hope to participate, if Mr. Runciman lets me, but that's for debate tomorrow at caucus.

"Mr. Runciman—I move that, in the opinion of this House, the McGuinty Liberal government's failures to develop and implement effective long-range plans to ensure the economic well-being of Ontario have led the province to the brink of have-not status and placed in jeopardy our ability to support cherished services such as health and long-term care, the environment, infrastructure renewal, education, transportation, tourism development, secure and affordable energy supplies, safe communities and agriculture."

1950

He has hit the nail right on the head. All those things are at risk right now, because without a strong economy, you have no social fabric left. Bob Rae is familiar with that. He had the social contract and had to pull the rabbit out of the hat, and the public sector has never forgiven him—never.

Actually, I'm quite interested, because I'm the municipal affairs critic and I think we are at the precipitous beginning of a serious—it's huge. As a matter of fact, I have some notes here that I'm going to scare you with—not meant deliberately. These are factual notes done by research people; these are not political.

Around 1988-89, they got into serious trouble. I tell you, David Peterson knew. He called the election early because they were going south. It was three years into the mandate, I believe—I'd have to go to the member from Carleton-Mississauga Mills; he's been here longer than all of us, and with good reason. I say that respectfully, because he's still here; he still cares. He's worried about the province; I can tell.

But I believe that in about 1988-89, they were three years into the 1985 mandate. They knew the recession was coming big time. They knew big time it was coming; everyone did. They called a quick election, but he was in Meech Lake when they called it, so he wasn't here most of the time. Anyway, they had commissioned a couple of studies at that time. When I say he was in Meech Lake at the time, I believe he was trying to be the next Prime Minister. But Ontario was heading south rather quickly. They called an early election, and in fact they lost. And surprise, surprise, in 1990 Bob Rae formed the government.

As I told you earlier, the economic factors are such that if your GDP is going down, your revenue goes down and your expenditures go up. They got caught in a precipitous slide that caused them great grief. It wasn't Bob Rae's fault. Floyd Laughren was a decent guy; he just used the wrong tools, and so is Dalton McGuinty. I'm telling you, Dalton's doing the same. They're going to spend their way through the recession. Do you realize that in the \$96-billion budget—

**Mr. Mike Colle:** On a point of order, Madam Speaker: The rules are that we're supposed to refer to members by their riding name. This member is repeatedly referring to people by their first name, and I hope that would be stopped.



**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath):** Thank you for that comment. In fact, I've reminded the member myself, and ask him to please observe that.

**Mr. Bill Murdoch:** We're just trying to be friendly over here. You don't need to get snotty about it.

*Interjections.*

**Mr. John O'Toole:** Member from Eglinton—Lawrence, I do respect that—

**Mr. Bill Murdoch:** What's your name? I forget that name.

**Mr. John O'Toole:** No, no. That's what we should do: keep this thing—because we really have a substantial argument to be made here.

We're talking about Bill 35, which is the new "spend the money at the last minute" bill. You have to consider—I always like to look at Hansard to see exactly if I was on topic. This is related. If you look at it, right now there's an important consultation going on municipally: the Provincial-Municipal Fiscal and Service Delivery Review. It's more or less headed by AMO, the Association of Municipalities of Ontario. If anyone has been here for any longer than 10 or 15 years, they would already know that this review has been done five times. It has been done a number of times. I'm just going to cite from the history. This review has been called a number of things—this time it has been called a shell game, in my belief, because they know.

The history is that David Peterson actually started it, and I can cite in this research paper how it started, and some of the trade-offs, called downloading and uploading. But this fiscal review in brief, stated by the Fair Tax Commission in 1993, the disentanglement report in 1991—and prior to that it suffered other names; it was called the Who Does What Commission in about 1996-97. But prior to that, the arguments were about who has the assessment wealth and who has the growth.

The fundamental question that this Bill 35 and the fiscal service review should be talking about is, what tax revenue pays for what service. It's kind of boring, but should municipal taxes be paying social costs?

Let's take, for instance, Madam Speaker, if Stelco or Dofasco in Hamilton, your riding, was to cease being in business, the social costs to the municipality would go through the roof on the social programming that it does. The housing issues and the tax revenue loss, which means those businesses that aren't in business don't pay industrial tax any longer, would be serious. In other words, their tax revenue would decline and their social programming costs would go up. Those programs that are social in nature should not be funded on a municipal basis.

The history is, if you know anything about it at all, that those social programs started at the local level; in fact, they started at the church basement level, churches wanting to do the right thing and help those in need in their community. Eventually, some of that was picked up. But under no circumstances, under any government—Bob Rae, David Peterson, Mike Harris, Ernie Eves, whatever—were they ever paid 100% by the province. It

has never happened, yet we look at this as being a download.

I can tell you what's being downloaded right now by Dalton McGuinty. Almost all the stuff that he's talking about is being downloaded right now. As I tell you right now, some of this greenbelt legislation, some of the source water protection legislation—all of it is being downloaded. It's being downloaded. They're picking up costs. Places to Grow documents: All the studies incorporated into official plans are now inordinate and expensive—costs for consultants and expert reports to comply with government policies. So those are downloading by any other name, no question about it.

I'm just going to kind of skip through this fiscal review, because I'm quickly running out of time here, and it's unfortunate. The summary of the findings: In 1985 to 1995—I'm reading a research paper here provided by independent, non-partisan groups—"The Peterson and-Rae administrations largely maintained the status quo with respect to municipal structures and programs in Ontario. In the municipal field, both of these administrations placed importance upon programs to expand the stock of affordable and social housing and legislation to expand the scope of rent regulation.

"In response to the recession of the early 1990s and the drop in provincial revenue, the New Democratic government in 1993 instituted the social contract, which over a subsequent period of three fiscal years set out to moderate provincial program spending"—that's reduce spending; that's code language—"and reduce provincial wage-related expenditures." Some 85% of public spending is payroll.

**Hon. Madeleine Meilleur:** What's wrong with that?

**Mr. John O'Toole:** It's good. I'm happy the minister is engaged. If it's payroll and you have a recession and your budget is committed, Minister—look around because your other minister from—no, the Attorney General. They don't spend much anyway. I think they cut them back. Look at the backup in courts today. They probably got a cut in the last budget. You interrupted there. That's okay. There was no out of order.

In response to the recession in the 1990s and the dropped provincial revenues: "... the social contract, which over a subsequent period of three fiscal years set out to moderate provincial ... spending.... It appears that provincial operating expenditures for municipal affairs were moderately reduced, but the government's allocations to social housing remained in place. The social contract also had an impact upon municipalities as major transfer partners including salary savings for municipal employees."

**2000**

Here's another one. This is an extremely good report. I'm happy to share it with anyone. Look up my website, and I'll have it on there. The Fair Tax Commission was established by the NDP government in March 1991. I was a councillor. I attended public meetings on it. It was a respectable process, but it was really about trying to figure out the same question. What revenue—local,



regional, provincial, federal—pays for what service? That's all this question is about. What's this delay in the review about? What's this Bill 35, one-time, lottery-style spending all about?

We know the solutions: Figure out what level of government should pay for what service and quit using the shell game to blame other levels of government for these various responsibilities and lack of funding. That's what's needed here, and it's going to take the courage and leadership of a person like John Tory to fix this.

**Hon. Christopher Bentley:** Who?

**Mr. John O'Toole:** Look, he's the best mayor the city of Toronto never had. But now he's going to be the best Premier Ontario has ever had. Just hold your breath—as long as necessary.

The Fair Tax Commission, established by the NDP government in 1991, recommended in its 1993 report that Ontario should replace—

*Interjections.*

**Mr. John O'Toole:** Listen to this; it's very important.

**Mr. Mike Colle:** Give up your seat, John.

**Mr. John O'Toole:** Give up your seat, Mr. Colle. You should've resigned anyway—Eglinton—Lawrence. You should listen to this, because you were a councillor at one time.

The Fair Tax Commission recommended in its 1993 report that Ontario should replace property tax as a source of core funding for education. Guess who did that? We actually followed.

There was another commission, a royal commission, For the Love of Learning, and it recommended that the province should be funding education so assessment-rich communities like Toronto wouldn't spend \$9,000—and Ottawa is another one, \$8,000—whereas little Durham was spending like \$4,500 dollars. It should be public—if you break your leg in Sudbury, the doctors get paid the same in Sudbury as they do in Toronto. It should be fair for everyone, and who changed that? That was one of the fundamental changes we made on uploading. The province of Ontario has to learn from history or you're doomed to repeat it.

What this report I'm working on now demonstrates is this: During the period of Mike Harris's review, called the David Crombie Who Does What commission, which I'll talk about, in that commission, the province of Ontario respected the Fair Tax Commission, the Who Does What commission, the disentanglement report, and tried to say, "Look, education is a very important social program for all children of all learning needs and places." We uploaded \$3 billion in education for the province—we couldn't take all the education—and the rate of the remainder of education funding was determined by the province on the residential tax base. It was about .27 or something. And that's how education is funded today.

We did download certain things, but we uploaded \$3 billion and moved other things that were more appropriate to local services, and that was \$2.5 billion. There were a number of other small items, highway transfers and things like that, that were argued about by AMO and

other groups that I've heard—Hazel McCallion—whining for five years about. Even—what's her name?—Parrish, was arguing with Hazel the other day. Anyway, there are a couple of the reports.

I would say that the current government is a bit evasive here. There's a sequence problem I have. That is that in August 2007, they committed to do this fiscal service review, which was good. Our leader, John Tory, said we all agreed with that review, which was about what tax revenue pays for what service. Our leader, John Tory, said in the leadership debate, I believe—he challenged them, face-to-face, man-to-man—

**Interjection:** Mano-a-mano.

**Mr. John O'Toole:** —mano-a-mano, and said, "Why don't you complete the review at the end of 2007 and have it take place in part in the 2007-08 budget?" No, they took \$1.5 billion and blew it out the door, and nobody to this moment actually knows where the money is. They've written the cheques, and they've sent some lists around, but I don't see any cranes going up anywhere.

This stuff here is another fantasy, really. This fiscal review has been delayed. It was supposed to be in the spring, it was in all the newspapers—I have articles here. Now I hear it's going to be late August, when everybody's at the cottage. It will slip in, fall in the paper and go into the circular file. We'll still be talking about who does what five years from now.

I believe that John Tory will actually fix it. He's a person who knows that to be a leader, you have to have a plan, you have to be committed to that plan and you have to be believable that you'll deliver the plan. What we have now is no plan and no commitment to deliver it.

Some other things I want to talk about here—I'm going to get off this fiscal review thing, because here's the official paper and it's pretty thorough. It's about 85 pages, and it deals with two parts: the legislative changes, as well as the changes between Bob Rae, David Peterson and Mike Harris. We're now at the point we're debating the same bill. Their plan, according to Bill 35, is about a lottery-style giveaway, probably politically motivated. If I'm wrong, and I hope I'm wrong, the evidence will be—history is the greatest predictor of the future—what did the member from Eglinton—Lawrence, who was then a minister, do? He gave a \$1-million cheque to clubs that never even applied. He had to resign, and to this day he doesn't know why he resigned. I'm sure he was doing it in the most honourable way—there were other powers at work. In all fairness, you should still be at the table. You're a decent fellow, but you got hoodwinked, unfortunately.

I would only say that I should stick to the script here. It's been written for me, so I should try to get down to it.

The problem with any of these kinds of bills, which are more or less what I would call—they're empowerment bills, really, because everything that happens in this bill, from the amount of the surplus, to the amount of expenditure, to whom it goes to and why, and what are the accountability and transparency mechanisms, are all in regulation. I challenge anyone who gets up in their two



minutes or 20 minutes or one hour to tell me, "Where's the beef?" There's nothing in this bill. It's a page and a half, and there's no mention of \$600 million, \$800 million, a percentage or any rules. It's all regulatory stuff that we're supposed to vote on.

Now, in theory I'll make a concession. I met with John Tory and many of the mayors at the ROMA/Good Roads convention. Many of them said these last-minute cheques that are dropped in their lap are purposefully used to pay off over-expenditures that may have occurred on certain projects or for other outstanding things. They're not misused. I would not leave that impression. Municipal people are accountable. They are at the lower end of the food chain, and they use every dollar.

But when Hazel McCallion heard about this cheque, do you know what she said? She said she was really glad to get it. They're going to put a levy on infrastructure, and she said, "I may get to reduce the infrastructure levy." She'll take the money from the province and won't change one thing except lower the taxes. Well, they've already got lower taxes than Durham. Everybody read that article. Durham region pays higher taxes than Toronto. To me, this is a tragedy.

They were bragging today about ending the pooling. The member from Pickering, in his prepared speech that the minister wrote for him—he just read it—said they ended pooling. Do you know something? The pooling—Durham region was paying for Toronto. What's this about? How could you ever justify sitting on that side of the House and still not—it's about time you did it; it only took you five years. You're bragging about something that took five years to do. You whined the whole time you were on council.

I would say that most of these things aren't said to be in any way mean-spirited, except that the bill itself is troubling. There is nothing in it that allows me to be—there's nothing in here for agriculture, there's nothing in here for the GM workers, there's nothing in here for the high taxes in the region of Durham. I see David Miller whining. He's worse than Hazel, whining and whining. In fairness to David Miller, he's worse off than Hazel. Hazel has brand new infrastructure. There are no wooden pipes in Mississauga. Hazel came in—she was the mayor of Streetsville when they formed the region—and she's been there ever since. She hired everybody, so they are all either related or they know her from birth.

The point is, they have brand new pipes and the 427 is full of commercial taxation. The city of Toronto is old; it has no place to build except up. The only place it can grow is up. They knock down \$500,000 homes, build condos that are 10 storeys high and increase the taxes. That's how they do it, isn't that right, member from Scarborough, Mr. Balkissoon? I can't use names anymore; they've disallowed that. I'm going to look it up—I know he's from Scarborough; he's an excellent member. Scarborough—Rouge River. He's right next to the area where I live.

## 2010

It is troubling when you see what's missing. I go back to the very substantive plan. What's wrong with Bill 35? We could all agree with this if it had two or three things that I heard our leader, John Tory, talk about: long-term commitments to predictable, stable funding, and working with the federal government on the Building Canada plan.

I don't call skateboard parks infrastructure; I call them important. They should not be built on the basis of revenue from Sudbury. They should be built on the purpose of the priorities of that community and their tax base.

Infrastructure is having safe water, safe schools and adequate hospitals. These are facilities that I believe the province has a responsibility to work on with the municipal level of government. Those kinds of grants would make sense if you're building a new water treatment plant so the people would have the safest water to drink; sewage treatment is another plan. I would agree with those kinds of expenditures. They're long-term. A major multimillion-dollar or billion-dollar expenditure is not something you plan on the 11th hour of the 11th day. We would all agree with that.

This giveaway money is not the sign of a strong leader with a strong plan. That's what is most troubling, without being personal and critical. A household can't run on the chance they might win the 6/49, and neither can a municipality. Under the assumption of no plan and leadership that has struggled without any plan except for what he told the people of Hamilton, to get steeled, or something like that—that is a clear definition to me of a leader without a plan. And a leader without a plan is taking you where his plan is, and that's nowhere.

So we have a challenge here to find some way to improve this bill, to put certainty in it, not leaving it to regulation and not leaving it to political manipulation, if you will, but a plan that comes up on the right side of the people of Ontario, working with municipal leaders, the mayors and chairs, who, with all due respect, have the best interests, the best knowledge. They need the flexibility to make the decisions that best suit them.

I'm fortunate to be able to take the time here—our member from Niagara West—Glanbrook will have more technical content with respect to budget legislation. As the municipal affairs critic, I can tell you that I want to be a partner who works with them to do what our leader, John Tory, said, which is to have honest dialogue with communities for long-term, stable, predictable funding and a partnership with them to make Ontario stronger. That's why I can't support Bill 35. It's a sham.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath):** Questions and comments?

**Mr. Michael Prue:** I listened intently for the hour. I'm not sure whether I was getting a history lesson or something that used to be on cartoons called *Fractured Fairy Tales*. In any event, I listened intently to what was being offered, and I was heartened when my friend from Durham said he often goes back to Hansard to read whether he stayed on topic. I invite him, in a day or two



when Hansard goes out, to look for April 7. I think he will be very impressed with how much he did, or did not, remain on topic.

He did make a statement, though, which harkened back to the days of my youth: a very funny and wonderful commercial where a little old lady comes out and yells, "Where's the beef?" I want to concentrate on that for the last minute, because I believe that was the best point he made: "Where's the beef?"

We've got here a four-page document that is very tiny, because the pages are not exactly filled—half of them, of course, are in French as well. There's not really very much here. I think the point he was trying to make is that this bill, which the government is trying to pass, allows far too much flexibility. There is nothing contained within the body of the bill because, as some honourable members have already stated, that will be found in the regulations. The regulations are not subject to this House, are not subject to the Legislature, can be passed and can be changed at any time, and hence, I think, are why many of the people on this side of the House are very wary of what is being put forward.

I will have an opportunity to speak to that myself, but I do commend the member for raising the question, "Where's the beef?"

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath):** Questions and comments? The member for Algoma-Manitoulin.

**Mr. Michael A. Brown:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's delightful to see you in the chair this evening.

I was somewhat taken aback by the member for Durham's hour diatribe on the speech by the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Finance. This is a simple bill. The bill says, essentially, that if there is a budget surplus of over \$800 million, we will provide amounts of more than \$600 million, I believe is the number, to the municipalities.

**Mr. Bill Murdoch:** It doesn't matter.

**Mr. Michael A. Brown:** You say it doesn't matter. It does matter. Municipalities are accountable.

I want to tell you that I had the opportunity last Friday to be in Espanola, where they needed to have work done on their infrastructure. It's a town of about 5,500 people with a paper mill—all forest products mills are experiencing challenges in the marketplace. They appreciated the \$3 million that was provided to upgrade their water treatment system.

Nairn Centre, Nairn and Hyman, Baldwin, Sables-Spanish, the township of Spanish, the township of the North Shore, Blind River and Huron Shores—I was at a meeting with them. They were exceptionally happy with the dollars that came out for infrastructure to help them with projects that have been on their books for years.

These municipalities have planned ahead. They know what they want to do, but they are often cash-strapped. So it makes some sense—it makes more than some sense; it makes a great deal of sense—that when the province is favoured with a budget surplus, we share it with our municipal partners so they can do the infrastructure work

that makes their townships, their towns and their cities better off. This will do that. I cannot imagine a member of this House standing up and saying that spending money on municipal infrastructure in a realistic way is bad public policy.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath):** Questions and comments? The member for Nepean-Carleton.

**Ms. Lisa MacLeod:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's wonderful to see you in the chair.

I really have to respond to the former speech. Let's be realistic. He wants to talk about how simple it is? It's simple in size and in its content. It's one page and a half. There's no long-term or sustainable funding for municipalities within it. All we have, as my colleague the honourable member from Durham rightly points out, are two things: a year-end slush fund, ripe for the pickings of cash out the back door, with no accountability; and a good point that he made earlier, which is that this is basically just the health tax money going back to municipalities. If they had any decency at all, they would just cut the health tax and give it to municipalities and taxpayers.

I'm not the only one saying this, nor is my colleague. A former Liberal member of Parliament, Carolyn Parrish, said, "They are playing games with us," adding that "McCallion is willing to take crumbs. I'm not." That's one of yours, not one of ours. I look at some of the newspaper columns. Christina Blizzard, a well-known Toronto Sun columnist, calls this "voodoo economics." That's what she said: "voodoo economics." And then the Toronto Star, as we know today, said, "Duncan's Bill is Flawed." Of course it's flawed; it's only a page and a half long, with no sustainable funding for municipalities. How are they supposed to plan? How are municipalities such as the city of Ottawa supposed to get on with not only addressing crumbling infrastructure but building new infrastructure where we've got high growth? I ask the honourable members opposite that question.

2020

**M<sup>me</sup> France Gélinas:** I'd like to make some comments to the member from Durham. He certainly was able to point out some of these shortcomings of Bill 35, Investing in Ontario Act, investir dans les communautés ontariennes. Starting with its size, we've all noticed that you won't strain your back carrying this bill around because it is rather light. Everybody has to thank the French Language Services Act for making this bill bilingual. Otherwise, we could fit it on one page.

Then he quoted our leader, Howard Hampton, when he talked about the importance of a strong jobs strategy, including a job commissioner, a right tax strategy and an industrial hydro rate. He also noted that through the leadership of the governments in Quebec and Manitoba they were able to avoid major job losses, while in Ontario we have seen the disappearance of over 200,000 manufacturing jobs and 20,000 forestry jobs. Those forestry jobs are mainly in the north, in little, one-industry communities. It has been devastating.



He was really good at painting us the picture that if a province had good leadership we would have had a surplus, and maybe that surplus would have gone to the municipalities. But none of this happened, did it? None of this happened. The March 12 press conference gave hope when there was no reason for any hope to be had. It talked about budgets for roads and transit and social housing, and zero money went to the municipalities. But I'll have a chance to add to this.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath):** The member for Durham for a response.

**Mr. John O'Toole:** I want to thank all of the members who actually stayed awake to listen. Members for Algoma-Manitoulin, Beaches-East York, Nepean-Carleton, and Nickel Belt, thank you very much.

I think it sums it up here. All members recognize there's not much in the bill. We're going to spend all this time, hours and hours, almost word by word, on a one-page bill. But I think it's all summed up here in a couple of the quotes that my good friend from Nepean-Carleton mentioned: "They are playing games with us," Parrish said yesterday, adding that McCallion 'is willing to take crumbs. I'm not.'" This is Mississauga arguing about the benefits of this lottery-style giveaway scheme. This is Mayor McCallion, whom many people have a lot of respect for—and I've never, ever argued with my grandmother. So here we go: "While the provincial plan won't solve all the problems, it's a step in the right direction." That doesn't say anything about what they're going to do with it. They're building, I think, a fire hall training centre or something, and it's probably needed.

Municipalities will use the money because Dalton, in four years of talking about downloading, hasn't uploaded anything. He's downloaded more. He's made it worse. I'm not saying that it wasn't correct for the realignment with the fiscal services review in place, but municipalities are struggling now because businesses are closing. Commercial businesses, restaurants and that, are going to be struggling.

The problem here is there's nothing substantive in this bill. It's frightening: a Premier of a great province with a one-page bill and no plan except to tell the people in Hamilton to be steely about this. Get over it. We need some vision, some charisma and some plan. There is nothing in it. It's one page. I could have done that, and I'm not trying to be the Premier of Ontario.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath):** Further debate?

**Mr. Michael Prue:** I will be sharing my time tonight with my colleague from Nickel Belt. I have never shared a leadoff speech before, so this is a first for me, and I guess for her as well.

**Mr. John O'Toole:** Don't use all the good quotes.

**Mr. Michael Prue:** I won't use all the good quotes.

This is a—how can I describe it? This is horrendous little bill. This is a bill that has been very poorly thought out and a bill that has so many faults in its four pages that I am surprised it has lasted this long.

As long as I have been here, these nearly seven years, as long as I have come into this House and seen the shenanigans of this place, I am still constantly amazed at—

*Interruption.*

**Mr. Michael Prue:**—people with their cell phones ringing.

*Interjections.*

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath):** Order, order.

Member for Beaches-East York.

**Mr. Michael Prue:** Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I am constantly amazed at the pomp and ceremony with which this government takes great pride, the pomp and ceremony of bringing in mayors and municipal leaders, the pomp and ceremony of having a full-blown press conference to announce almost nothing, and then supplanting it all with a bill that is virtually deficient of content and detail. I watched in wonder the convoluted explanation that the Minister of Finance gave to the assembled press corps on March 12, as he unburdened himself and said \$600 million is going to go to pay for a deficit, and then there's another \$200 million which he did not understand—and I'm not sure the bill ever addresses—that might be set aside as well, and then, on top of that, the municipalities are going to have this huge hoard of money with which to do wonderful things. I listened to that and then I listened to the gushing comments of the three souls who had been brought in to say wonderful things about getting municipal funding.

Now, as I've said here earlier today, all people who have been in municipal politics are happy to get money. I am not surprised that Mayor Hazel McCallion of the city of Mississauga was happy that there might be some money flowing to her and her municipality. I'm not surprised that Councillor Shelley Carroll of the city of Toronto, who is the budget chief, was happy that at the end of the year there might be some money flowing to the city of Toronto. I am not at all surprised that Doug Reycraft, who was the third person there, from the Association of Municipalities of Ontario, thought that all 480 municipalities in this wondrous province were somehow going to see some funds.

You know, I listened to them and I thought, "My God, they actually think some money's going to flow here. They actually think there's going to be some money at the end of the year and they're going to end up with it." They thought this was a plan that was tailor-made for them.

During the press conference, not one word was said by the Minister of Finance about what municipalities really need. What municipalities really need is long-term, stable, committed funding that they can count on each and every year. I look at the great cities around the world, and virtually all of them get that kind of long-term, stable, committed funding each and every year. In most of the European countries, a percentage of the income tax goes to the municipalities. In places in the United States, there are both federal and state taxes that flow to the municipi-



palities. In fact, one of the few places in the world where that is so low is here in Ontario. That's why Ontario has the dubious distinction that of all of the jurisdictions in the world, people in Ontario pay the highest property taxes in the entire world—not just in Canada; in the entire world. They pay that because municipalities do not have a secure, balanced and dependable source of revenue.

I will admit that in the last couple of years, there have been two cents that have flowed from this government, in the form of a gas tax, to the municipalities—but not to all municipalities, just to those that have transit. I will admit that the federal government has likewise put over two cents to all of the municipalities of the country, including those in Ontario. But the bottom line remains that that is not enough to take away the burden on the municipal taxpayer, the burden that he or she or they must hold onto each and every year.

As the *Toronto Star* unfolds on its editorial pages about the costs of taxes in Toronto vis-à-vis the costs in Durham or the costs in York or the costs in Oshawa, and they had all these different names and how much taxes cost, what was lost in all of that debate, as people started to squabble amongst each other, was the fact that the taxes were so high in any of the jurisdictions.

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So when I went there, I was hoping the minister was actually going to say something strong and forceful. I thought for a minute he might start to talk about ending the download. During the election I know that the Premier talked about ending the download by 2011 when it came to ODSP payments for the municipalities. I was hoping against hope that there may be some start to that program, or a start to the program for the medical expenditures related to people on ODSP. But no, there was none of that. What there was, was this ethereal statement that if there is money at the end of the year, and if that money is more than \$600 million, and if there's another \$200 million for a purpose or purposes that is not clearly understood, then some money may flow to the municipalities.

I saw three smiling municipal politicians walk out the door and talk to the press. The press was not having a very good time of it with them. The press asked Mayor McCallion what she was going to do with the money because she explained quite clearly that instead of putting the 5% surcharge on every resident of Mississauga, she might only have to put a 3%, 2% or 1% surcharge on them for infrastructure. The councillor from the city of Toronto explained that it was going to possibly make it easier for budget day next year. Mr. Reyecraft, from the Association of Municipalities of Ontario, said, quite frankly, that he thought the municipalities could all use some money. Of course, he was absolutely right. But there was nothing there for long-term, stable planning that a municipality needs to do.

Mr. Speaker, I waited, and it only took six days for this bill to come before this House. I got Bill 35, and you know how it works here. Bill 35 is brought over to me by

a page—I said “Mr. Speaker.” I'm sorry, I'm just so used to that, Madam Speaker.

The bill was brought over to me by a page as the minister was on his feet speaking. So quite literally, as he was speaking and I was trying to read the bill and listen to him, it became quite apparent that this bill was not what the people from the municipalities expected, nor what they thought, gushed about, hoped for, nor what they explained to the press. I'd just like to go through the provisions of the bill, because it's only four pages, but I would be surprised if all members have read it, given that there is so much general support in this room. I would like them to read exactly what they're supporting.

I turn to the explanatory note. It says in the first paragraph, “The Investing in Ontario Act, 2008 authorizes the Minister of Finance to make payments out of money appropriated by the Legislature to certain persons and entities that do not carry on their activities for the purpose of gain or profit.” This, quite literally, when you read this—and I'm going to get into the actual wording in the bill—means that it can be given to literally almost anyone. We have learned since then it cannot be given to hospitals. It cannot be given to schools. But it can be given to cricket clubs. It can be given to any group, any organization or any person that is non-profit, that does not ordinarily make a profit.

So when all the members opposite talk about giving the money to municipalities—and who here is going to speak against that?—I have to ask them who in the government side is going to speak up that this does not even name municipalities. The word “municipality” does not even appear in this bill, not even once.

Then I went on to the next paragraph:

“The total payments made under the new act in each fiscal year shall not exceed the lesser of,

“(a) the amount appropriated by the Legislature; and

“(b) the amount that would otherwise be the annual surplus for that fiscal year less the prescribed amount, if any, of that surplus allocated to the reduction of the accumulated deficit.”

In ordinary parlance, what this means is that the Legislature can set any amount it wants, or, through a convoluted and difficult-to-understand regimen, the minister can say, “This is how much money there is, but we're taking away a certain portion of it because we have other purposes for it and we may take away other amounts,” which is, in fact, what he claimed.

I went on down that page to read that the whole thing is going to be done by regulation, because it says, “The Lieutenant Governor in Council is authorized to prescribe by regulation the recipients to whom payments may be made”—notice it doesn't say “municipalities”—“the purposes for which payments may be made”—it doesn't tell everybody how they're to spend it—“the method of and basis for calculating the payments, the activities in which the Minister of Finance may engage in furtherance of the purposes of this act and the amount of the surplus, if any, for a fiscal year that must be allocated to the reduction of the province's accumulated deficit.”



Again, in very real government doublespeak, what this is saying is that everything is going to be done by regulation. The regulation is the prerogative of the minister and the prerogative of the cabinet. So the cabinet can literally, with this bill, if we put our hands up to vote for it, do anything they want. They can give it to municipalities, they can give it to cricket clubs, they can give it to anybody who doesn't make a profit, but they can't give it to hospitals or educational institutions.

I went on to look at what else is in the bill. The first page of the actual bill talks about the "eligible recipient." This is important. The definition of "eligible recipient," in subsection 1(2) reads: "a person or entity, other than an individual but including a partnership whose members may be individuals, that does not carry on activities for the purposes of gain or profit." The reason this is important is subsection 2(1), which states, "The Minister of Finance may, out of the money appropriated therefor by the Legislature and in accordance with this act and the regulations, make payments in respect of a fiscal year beginning on or after April 1, 2007," which is a whole year away, "to eligible recipients on such terms and conditions as the minister considers advisable." So any eligible person, any "eligible recipient" can get the money merely on the say-so of the minister—whatever the minister thinks is advisable. He can give it to any individual, any non-profit corporation, anybody he wants in the province of Ontario.

If that is not bad enough, I draw your attention to "April 1, 2007"—that's already a year ago. That means that anything that was left over in the past year can be given away. The retroactive regulation is found on the third page, subsection 3(2): "A regulation is, if it so provides, effective with reference to a period before it is filed." So all the planning here can be done and the regulations can come out, and it is effective before it's even filed. So the minister already has something in mind, for sure. The minister has something in mind—who or what body is going to get this money—and we have no authority in this House to look at it. I think that is terribly, terribly wrong.

I went on to read subsection 14(1) of the complementary amendments: "An expenditure incurred by the government of Ontario in respect of a fiscal year under the Investing in Ontario Act, 2008 shall be considered to be an expense of the government of Ontario for that fiscal year for the purpose of this act." What this means is that at some future time after the books are closed, usually in August or September of a given year, the money can be given out and is, in fact, part of the expenditure for the year before.

This is very dangerous for this House and very dangerous for the committee process, because when the public accounts committee meets, usually in the fall of each year, to determine how the expenditures are made, if the expenditures have not been given out by that point, they will not be known and they will not be subject to review by the auditor. They can be given out at any time, and they are retroactive to the year before. What is to

stop this government, or any government in the future, from holding on to that money for a prolonged period of time and taking it out of the purview and the careful, watching eye of the auditor of the province of Ontario? This is money that is left over. This is money that in the past was shovelled out the door. This is, I am afraid, money that will be legally sanctioned to be shoved out the door for which there will be no controls by the auditor of the province of Ontario, who works for this Legislature, to actually look and see how the money is being expended.

If that wasn't bad enough, I turned to the last page, "Expenditures under the Investing in Ontario Act, 2008," subsection (2.0.1). It states, "An expenditure incurred by the government of Ontario in respect of a fiscal year under Investing in Ontario Act, 2008 shall be recorded as an expense of the government of Ontario for that fiscal year in the summary financial statements set out in the public accounts for that fiscal year."

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This is done some time after. It will, in my view—and I've spoken with people on the public accounts committee—constrain the auditor in a way that the auditor has not been constrained in the past. So if you asked me, this is what I read on that date, when I stood up in this House and gave a preliminary five minutes: (a) it does not involve municipalities; (b) it does not speak to the function for which all Liberals have so far spoken, that is, infrastructure and how the municipalities would spend the money; (c) it is retroactive in its provisions, which generally makes for bad law; and (d) it is not subject to the proper accounting principles set out by the Auditor General of the province of Ontario. If you want to know why I think this is a horrendous little bill, that's it in a nutshell.

Yet all members will stand up and wax eloquent about how we need to give this money to the municipalities of Ontario. I would agree with them: We need to give money to the municipalities of Ontario. But is this the avenue? Is this the vehicle? Is this the way this government wants to do it? I would suggest that the way to do it is through a proper budgeting process, when the minister stands up in this House, as he did a couple of weeks ago, and says, "This is where we're going to spend the money." That's where it should be. Quite frankly, when he stood up two weeks ago and talked in this House about the amount of money that may be available for the municipalities, that money had shrunk from an anticipated \$750-million budget surplus, to \$800 million during the course of the discussion downstairs, to \$600 million on budget day. I don't have to tell you that that means this bill is for naught. For at least a year, it means nothing. And at the end of the year, the municipalities don't even have to be mentioned when it comes back around again. At the end of the year, this will allow the money to flow any other place the government chooses.

Our job, here on the opposition side, is not simply to oppose but to point out where governments are not acting, in our view, in the best interests. We are watch-



dogs. That is what we do over here. It is the role that was given to us by the people of Ontario when they elected a Liberal majority government. The role that fell to us is to watch, point out when things are wrong and get the government to take account of it. That's why I'm standing here today. I think this bill should be withdrawn. I think this is a bill that should not be before this House. Surely, if the Minister of Finance were here, and if he had long enough to think about it and talk about it, he would not be proceeding with this bill.

I am mindful that this is a government with 70 members. I am mindful that at the end of the day they can pass this bill if they want. But I am also mindful that there are expectations that have been raised that will probably never be met within the four walls of this bill. There are municipal politicians who believe they are going to get some money at the end of the year, and the budget exercise has already shown that there is, or likely is, none to be had. There are people who expect that this is going to be for municipalities only, and they will be sorely tested in the years to come when this or any other government chooses to spend it in another direction.

I'm not alone in this. On March 12, or a day or two after March 12, there were a couple of newspaper columns and editorials talking about how badly crafted this particular idea was. They pointed out, quite rightly in my view, that municipalities need strong, accountable monies given to them on a regular basis, on which they can rely, not merely a year-end "whatever is left over is yours." There were also quite a few comments in, I believe, both the *Toronto Sun* and the *Globe and Mail* about how bad this particular bill is. This is all much different from what I saw in the *Star*.

When I woke up and read the *Toronto Star* today, you can imagine my surprise. I usually read the *Toronto Star* editorials and wonder who, in the Liberal Party, has written them, because they always talk about the wonder of the government and how it's doing everything right, and even if it's incremental they can still go along with it because there's hope down the road that some day what the *Toronto Star* really wants will be done. You can imagine my surprise when I read the editorial comment today. I'm just going to read a little bit of it: "Ontario Finance Minister Dwight Duncan's plan to share year-end provincial surpluses may not be exactly as advertised." They go on and state, "But a close examination of its contents shows no mention of municipalities or infrastructure. Nor does it set out the threshold or formula for distributing the surplus money." Skip down a little bit more: "The bill leaves it up to cabinet to decide who is eligible, how the money can be spent, and how payments are to be calculated."

It goes on: "A spokesperson for Duncan said the particulars will be set out in the regulations. The reason, he said, is that it is easier to change regulations than legislation if the government decides in future years to tinker with the formula or spend the money in a different sector." It then finally closes off with the words, "After revelations last year about the McGuinty government's

lax controls on year-end grants to cultural groups, Duncan ought not to leave any room for doubt by stipulating in his bill what will go to municipal infrastructure."

I can only ask the government to be heartened and harkened by these words. I can only ask them to look at this and say to them, is this the kind of legacy you want to leave with this bill? A bill that leaves it wide open where the money goes, a bill where people will continue to say things about slush funds and continue to say things about the government doling out year-end resources to its friends, a role where, quite frankly, I don't think this government wants or needs to go.

It is a time for this government to reflect, given the circumstances of last year, given the hundreds of questions that were asked around the slushgate, whether or not they want to set a new and a clear and an above-board goal for this Legislature. In my view, it can be done. In my view, this bill should be withdrawn and something better put in its place where the monies are guaranteed to municipalities, notwithstanding that the government may want to give them in some future time to some other place. But quite frankly, I don't know that that's going to happen. As I said earlier, there are 70 members opposite. They have their way to force this through. Should this bill be sent to committee, I would ask that it be committed far and wide, and I would ask that—

**Hon. George Smitherman:** Committed far and wide?

**Mr. Michael Prue:** Far and wide—and that the people who came in here from the municipalities be asked to comment specifically on what is contained within the four walls of the legislation. I would ask as well that they consider withdrawing those sections of the bill that allow it to be open-ended, and I would ask that they also consider, in effect, gutting the bill and replacing it with legislation that will ensure that the money that is collected from the public is spent wisely and carefully and securely in a place where the auditor can examine it, where this Legislature can examine it and where the minister can be held accountable at the time of its disbursement, not at subsequent times, in future months or years, when the heat is off. I would also note that this, as it's presently written, would allow for the minister to give out these funds, quite probably, when the House is not in session over the summer or fall months, because I can see that coming too.

In all, those would be my comments on this bill. It is, to reiterate, a horrendous little bill that ought not to be before this House.

Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'll give the balance of my time to my colleague from Nickel Belt.

**M<sup>me</sup> France Gélinas:** Je crois qu'il y a une erreur quelque part. On commence le 12 mars dernier : le ministère des Finances émet un communiqué de presse, dans lequel on retrouve « Investir dans les collectivités ontariennes », un nouveau projet de loi. J'ai le projet de loi devant moi, d'ailleurs; ça fait le projet de loi 35. À date, les choses vont bien.



Le gouvernement dirige les excédents budgétaires du budget provincial sur les routes, les transports en commun et le logement social. C'est une bonne nouvelle pour les municipalités. Elles sortent leur propre communiqué de presse de ce dont ils sont contents.

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Le gouvernement de l'Ontario propose une loi pour affecter les excédents supplémentaires aux municipalités de la province. Selon la loi proposée, qui s'intitulerait Loi de 2008 permettant d'investir dans l'Ontario, une partie des excédents du gouvernement provincial serait affectée aux municipalités au titre de leurs besoins en infrastructure, comme l'amélioration des routes et des ponts, l'accroissement des services de transport en commun et la mise à niveau des logements sociaux. Quelle bonne nouvelle; tout le monde est content.

Le gouvernement est actuellement tenu d'affecter tous les excédents à la fin de l'exercice à la réduction de la dette provinciale, mais cette loi va modifier cela. C'est la fête; on est tous contents : finalement les municipalités vont recevoir un petit peu d'argent. Mais lorsque le projet de loi 35 arrive et que l'on le lit, on n'y mentionne pas les municipalités, on ne mentionne pas d'argent supplémentaire, on ne mentionne plus le logement social, les transports en commun ou rien de cela. C'était comme une mauvaise blague qu'ils ont essayé de nous passer parce que cela n'a pas donné l'effet escompté du tout.

One of the things we in the opposition benches are getting accustomed to under the McGuinty government is the introduction of new legislation where pomp and ceremony consistently supplant content and details. Like cash-starved municipalities, we had hoped for action in the budget in addressing Ontario's mounting infrastructure deficit and the chronic need for repairs and upgrades to our municipal water systems, sewage systems, roads and bridges, as well as the expansion of our transit system and maybe for more social housing.

New Democrats had hoped that when it came to providing the desperately needed long-term funding for infrastructure investment that protects public health, our environment and our economy, the McGuinty government would come forward with a sizable down payment on the growing \$60-billion infrastructure deficit facing Ontario municipalities. That includes a \$30-billion to \$40-billion deficit in water and sewage infrastructure alone.

In my riding of Nickel Belt, the southern part of the city of greater Sudbury has been boiling water for the past two and a half years because we need improvements to our water system. This is not a Third World country. I realize we are in northern Ontario, but why has it taken two and a half years? To this day, my mother-in-law and father-in-law are still boiling water, because they live in that area of my riding where the municipality has no money to pay to fix our water system.

Another budget has come and gone, and cash-starved municipalities still struggle under provincial downloading, and infrastructure renewal is just not happening. Before I discuss the details, or the lack of details, contained

in Bill 35, the Investing in Ontario Act, I would like to address the issue of municipal infrastructure funding, the issue that this bill was supposed to deal with. We were all hopeful that it was about to deal with this: downloading and the infrastructure deficit.

As New Democrats have argued time and again, revenue spent funding provincial programs over the past years have left the municipal cupboards bare, and infrastructure funding has greatly suffered. The Federation of Canadian Municipalities estimates that Ontario bridges need \$2 billion over the next five years for rehabilitation alone. It's little wonder that the government's \$1-billion, end-of-year rollout has been seen as little more than a down payment.

At the same time as the lifespan of infrastructure is reaching an end, many municipalities across the province—especially those dependent on agriculture, manufacturing and forestry—are finding the municipal taxpayer overstretched and increasingly unemployed. Losing industry is devastating to the property tax base of Ontario municipalities. In smaller communities, property taxes on local industry make up a substantial proportion of the property tax base. When a mill or a plant shuts its door, municipalities can find themselves having a very difficult time paying the bills, yet, because the McGuinty government is failing to fully fund downloaded, provincially mandated services, these same municipalities have little choice but to raise property taxes to cover services which shouldn't be theirs in the first place. So funding that should be used for infrastructure goes to paying bills for provincially mandated services downloaded onto municipalities.

There was what we call a deathbed repentance by the McGuinty Liberals just prior to the 2007 election campaign, where they promised to eliminate the roughly \$660 million of ODSP that municipalities are being forced to pay. But we will have to wait till 2011 to see that happen. They also said they would upload \$173 million for the Ontario drug benefit program.

But when we add up the promises and subtract from the \$3.1-billion total, the municipalities are still out of pocket \$2 billion—\$2 billion of property taxes going to pay for provincial programs when municipalities desperately need those funds to repair roads and other infrastructure such as transit. Failing to pay its own bills for provincially mandated programs translates into Ontario having the highest property taxes in the country, as my colleague from Beaches–East York explained a minute ago.

What is the McGuinty government response to the public infrastructure deficit across Ontario? A long-term plan with funding certainty, as requested by the municipalities? No. Not at all. The McGuinty government answer is to allow any future provincial surpluses to be allocated to any eligible entity at a time when designated long-term funding is required by Ontario's municipalities.

The minister announced that he proposed to introduce Bill 35 at a press conference on March 12 with municipal



politicians, including the mayor of Mississauga and the president of the Association of Municipalities of Ontario. The minister stated that the bill would be a way to fund municipal infrastructure in times of future surplus. Everybody was happy.

Now, forget about the fact that there may not be a surplus large enough in the 2007-08 fiscal year to turn over any infrastructure funding to Ontario municipalities. Forget about all that, because now we have the legislation in hand, and what we can see is rather troubling. This is Bill 35. In this bill you will not find the word "infrastructure"; it is not mentioned once. You will not find the word "municipality"; it is not mentioned once either. This bill may, in the event of surpluses of any size, fund "eligible recipients," but that does not necessarily mean municipalities, and it certainly doesn't mean infrastructure.

I asked whether municipal councils across the province—the same municipal councils starving for infrastructure funding—are aware that this bill is not specifically about them and their needs, but could include any non-governmental agency and organization to which the government chooses to channel the funding.

This legislation could almost be seen as a joke—a cruel joke. The enabling and open-ended nature of this legislation does nothing other than create a legislative framework through which the government can potentially roll out any surplus funds at the end to any group they want through an order in council. We know that the McGuinty Liberal government was caught rolling out funding to various groups at the expense of others, without proper guidelines in place, last year during what was called the slush fund scandal. I would venture to say this legislation is a veiled attempt by the McGuinty government to create a legislative framework for them to continue picking winners and losers in times of budget surplus. It is seriously flawed in its present state, and the New Democrats will not be supporting it. We will be amending this legislation so that it applies specifically to municipalities and specifically to infrastructure funding needs.

One is left wondering, why couldn't we be using this legislative time to do something that would benefit municipalities and their infrastructure, like making long overdue amendments to the Development Charges Act, instead of spending time providing a legislative framework to inoculate the government against future slush fund scandals as witnessed last year? We are not listening to the request of the Association of Municipalities of Ontario during the pre-budget hearings and amending the Development Charges Act to ensure that any future pays its own way.

New Democrats have raised this issue in the past, and will continue to call on the McGuinty government to stop subsidizing developers at the expense of municipal government, but we won't be sanctioning the McGuinty government's desire to channel surpluses away from municipalities and municipal infrastructure, as this bill

will do in its present form. We will not be supporting this bill.

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**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath):** Questions and comments? The member for London—Fanshawe.

**Mr. Khalil Ramal:** Thank you, Madam Speaker, for giving me the chance to respond to the members for Beaches—East York and Nickel Belt. I was listening carefully to both members speaking about this bill. The member for Beaches—East York talked for a long time about how bad the bill is and that it is not specific about municipalities and many different things in the bill. But I want to tell you that it's very important to give flexibility to that finance minister and the government, especially when you have extra money after the end of the year, to be able to support municipalities, colleges and universities, and many different entities in the province of Ontario if they are committed to increasing jobs and to doing good for the people of Ontario. That's what this government is all about; it's about supporting the people of Ontario.

We're talking about many good initiatives that this government came up with, especially in the last budget. I'll give you an example from my riding. We got almost \$6 million for bridges and roads. We also got \$11 million for Innovation Park. All these initiatives came because our economy performed more than expected.

I think it's important to have a government concerned about the people and a government that believes strongly about partnerships, especially with municipalities across the province. The Minister of Finance said clearly that if we have more than \$600 million this year, we are going to give municipalities across Ontario some share of this revenue to enable them to support their infrastructure or whatever they need to strengthen their ability to serve their communities.

I know this bill is open, because we want to give flexibility, as I mentioned, to the finance minister every year for when we have extra money to support other institutions and non-profit organizations across the province—maybe colleges and universities, maybe some organizations that do a great job for the people of Ontario—to have the ability to serve in a good way. That's why we have flexibility. That's why I'm supporting the bill. Hopefully I'll get a chance to speak more.

**Mr. Norman W. Sterling:** Bill 35 is really an attempt by the government to fudge the books even further than they've been able to over the last four or five years. We've seen, over the last four or five years, this government flush money out the back door at the end of the year. Each year over the last three years, the auditor has criticized this government sternly for doing so, because he has felt that this government has spent money unwisely at the end of the year—not according to program; the criteria weren't there.

*Interjection.*

**Mr. Norman W. Sterling:** Read the auditor's report, Minister of Community and Social Services. He chastises



your ministry and your government for the way they've handled their financial affairs.

This particular bill is to get around the fact that even with all the bureaucrats they have within their ministries, they can't predict how much money is coming in. So heaven forbid that they might find out in August, when the public accounts are wrapped up for the end of the year in March 31, that they have too much money because they have overtaxed us, the taxpayers, that they might end up with perhaps \$2 billion, and that that would have to go against the deficit; that would have to go against the debt.

A lot of people have the idea, because this government has brought in huge amounts of revenue, partially through taxation, that they're paying all their debt. They're not. They increased the debt this year by \$5.5 billion. The debt is growing larger in this province even though we have a very wealthy province at this time. This bill is a bad bill: a lot of regulations; no accountability for this Parliament.

**Mr. Pat Hoy:** I'm pleased to rise and make a few comments about Bill 35, following on the comments made by my colleagues opposite. This bill, the Investing in Ontario Act, is an important one. It talks to unanticipated surpluses. Of course, this happens even within business. I know persons who are not entirely sure what their income will be during the year. Some get bonuses that are not explicit at the beginning of the calendar year; some get profit-sharing that is not fully known at the beginning of the year. Companies large and small can set out a budget, and likely do, to be prudent in their business practices, but are not entirely sure until the end of the year, when they do their accounting, whether they are in a surplus or a deficit position. As an agriculturalist, I know this all too well, because in our business we often deal with yields that are entirely unpredictable and prices that are largely unpredictable, and one could have a surplus or not.

I think the members opposite have to look at what we've done with our municipal partnerships in the past. We're working hard to upload ODSP, as one example. We have the Ontario municipal partnership fund. I know that Chatham-Kent is involved in this and appreciates the huge benefits that come from that. Recently, Chatham-Kent received \$6.4 million for roads or bridges, and they can determine which road or bridge they want to repair, whether it be a road in total, partially, a bridge, bridges—they have all kinds of options. These kinds of investments that we want to make in Ontario are important, and they're very important in my riding, where they have done an inventory: We have 900 bridges.

**Mrs. Julia Munro:** I just want to comment on a couple of the issues that I think are behind this bill. Previous to this bill, any surplus was allocated to debt. The purpose of this bill is to reallocate any money that might be available. I think it's very important, because many of the speakers supporting this bill have talked about how important it is to be able to provide various institutions and groups—municipalities and others—with the poten-

tial of this money. They've talked about it from the point of view of how badly municipalities need this kind of funding.

I would suggest to you that Ontarians need this kind of funding. When you put money against the debt, you actually create more money for the government, because you're reducing the interest and the carrying charges, which is obviously the debt that our children and grandchildren will inherit. So I think that to suggest that giving the money at this point to other causes is somehow more valuable than reducing Ontario's debt is highly questionable. The money, as it stands in Bill 35, would simply go somewhere. Municipalities aren't even named in this bill. We know that it will be available to not-for-profits. So it does mean that the whole question of accountability and transparency are missing from this piece of legislation.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath):** Response, member for Beaches–East York.

**Mr. Michael Prue:** I listened intently to what my colleagues had to say: the member from London–Fanshawe, the member from Carleton–Mississippi Mills, the member from Chatham–Kent–Essex and the member from York–Simcoe. Time will only let me comment back on a couple of them.

The member from London–Fanshawe talked about flexibility, and that, I guess, is flexibility for the government to give the money to whomever it wishes to give the money to. He was careful not to state that it was going to municipalities, because I think very clearly he understands that it may not go to municipalities this year or any year. He was also very clear to talk about how there are many other good, deserving places, and he mentioned colleges and schools. I tried to be very clear and succinct in my own comments to let him know that it is my belief and my understanding of this bill that monies cannot go to colleges, cannot go to schools and cannot go to hospitals and many things like that. It just can't, because they are expected to get their money within the four walls of the budget. So I have difficulty understanding the flexibility angle, save and except if you want to give it to non-traditional sources, such as soccer clubs or cricket clubs or the like.

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Second, the member from Carleton–Mississippi Mills said it was a bad bill. I think he caught this right. He explained about the audit process. Now, this is the dean of the House. This is someone who is the chair of the audit committee and knows full well the rigours that have to be undertaken by the committee, how the committee looks at the expenditures, how the Auditor General reports, when one can expect the bills to be finalized, things to be explained to the committee and back to the House. I would take what he has to say very seriously, because this bill will hamper the audit process. So I support what he had to say.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath):** Thank you. Further debate?



**Mr. Khalil Ramal:** I think it's a very important bill, despite many people from the opposite side speaking against it. The Minister of Finance, in his leadoff speech, mentioned exactly and clearly this ability to support municipalities. As you know, throughout the history of this province, especially under the Conservative regime, many municipalities suffered a great deal. They downloaded all the responsibility on to municipalities, and most of them almost went bankrupt because of the downloading of the provincial government on to municipalities in many different aspects. In health, ambulance services; in the social aspect, housing—many, many different elements of municipalities and the social structure were being downloaded on to municipalities.

When we were elected in 2003, we started to upload all the services. We took full responsibility as a province, as the government of Ontario, to support municipalities, to go back into the business of affordable homes, the business of ambulances and health care and many different aspects.

I want to state clearly that this government and finance minister are committed 100% to partnerships with municipalities, because we believe strongly that without partnerships with municipalities, we cannot survive; we cannot have progress as the province of Ontario. We have to work together in order to be a strong, able province, to be able to compete at the national level and also at the international level.

We've taken a lot of initiatives since we got elected. We uploaded ambulance service. We uploaded ODSP. We committed for two cents of the gas tax to go to municipalities, to support transit infrastructure and municipalities. Lately, in this budget, we committed \$100 million to reconstruct and fix the affordable homes we have across the province of Ontario. Nobody talked about this in the past. We talk about something that exists, that we want to fix. We're going to put it back on the market to enable our people in the province of Ontario to use it. Also, besides that support, we give a lot of rent support, to enable people to rent a place, subsidized by the government of Ontario. Besides that, we created a rent bank for people who are underprivileged and unable to sustain the rent to get some kind of financial support to keep paying their rent. Also, we created programs to support people who don't have enough money to pay for hydro. There are many, many different initiatives, all because we committed to support municipalities and communities across the province of Ontario.

Lately, due to support from the provincial government through the RED program, we were able to give \$2.5 million to the wheat board in the province of Ontario to partner with a company called the Original Cakerie. It came from British Columbia to open in London, Ontario, in my riding of London—Fanshawe. This company came because of support being given to the company to come and open in London. This company would strengthen the economy of my riding, London—Fanshawe, London and the whole region, because this company would consume \$30 million worth of eggs, milk and butter. That's very

important. This program was put together because the government of Ontario believes strongly that by strengthening the communities and municipalities, they are then able to strengthen the province of Ontario. Because this province is, we believe strongly, the engine of the whole nation. If this engine is not working, the whole body is not going to work.

That's why I think this bill is important. That's why many of my colleagues have stood up to speak about the details of this bill, about the elements of this bill.

The Minister of Finance was clear, when he introduced this bill, about its importance to give the ability to support municipalities. Many different municipal partners in this province benefited: from Mississauga, to Doug Reycraft, head of the Association of Municipalities of Ontario, and many small municipalities, Ottawa. Many municipalities were delighted to hear the Minister of Finance come up with such a proposal to give them the support if we have extra money beyond \$600 million.

I was listening to the Conservative members speaking a few minutes ago, and they don't believe at all in partnerships with municipalities. They don't believe at all in giving back to the community, back to the municipalities to support them. They believe we have to go against the deficit, against the debt. They think that indirectly, we'll save some money. But I want to tell the Conservative members that it's very important for us to keep investing in our communities. The only way we can stimulate the economy is by investing in the communities, by building roads.

This is what has happened in London. They got \$5.6 million in this budget to fix the roads and bridges, and they got \$11 million to establish the new Innovation Park to attract more companies to open in London. This is very important. This park is supported by the province and the municipalities of London. Guess what they do? They construct it in a way, put in the infrastructure, the sewer system, the hydro, the road, and get it ready for any company that wants to come and open in London. Due to this park, we're able to attract many great companies from across the globe to come and open in London.

The honourable Minister Bentley was with me not long ago to be part of announcing Hanwha that came from Korea to make kitchen countertops. This company is going to invest \$171 million in London. It's very important. Original Cakerie and many other companies want to come because the province of Ontario gave the city of London \$11 million and some money from before, to construct that park and prepare it for the companies to come to London.

This bill will give that ability to the Minister of Finance to support the city of London, the city of Ottawa, the city of Windsor and all the municipalities across the province, to be able to utilize the money to construct facilities, fix the roads or build whatever community centre they need in order to attract more people and sustain jobs and their ability to compete. It's the only way we can do it.



We showed our commitment to municipalities when we introduced the gas tax. London, Ontario alone started with about \$5.6 million, and now there is almost \$10 million. Also, we gave an additional \$9 million not long ago, and conditional money to support the transit system, not just to buy buses, but maybe to build kiosks for people for people to sit in in the wintertime, maybe to create more stops or maybe to change their fleet to be accessible for people with disabilities.

We on this side of the House and in this government believe in municipalities. We believe in partnerships. That's why we keep supporting municipalities to help them cope with the downloading from over the years from many different governments that came to this House. This government is committed to creating a balance, supporting municipalities and giving them the strength and the ability to come back to life with full economic strength, to employ people and create some kind of surplus for the economy. The only way we can be strong as a province is when all of us work together. Municipalities small and large, urban and rural Ontario, all need to work together. With support from this province, from this government, they will be able to produce more, they'll be able to be economically sound and fit and they'll be able to compete.

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No doubt about it, municipalities at this time are facing some challenges and they need our support. That's why Bill 35 gives the Minister of Finance some flexibility, when our economy is performing well, to come forward and help them and give them the support they need. Every municipality has different needs and different requirements. So we cannot say to all municipalities, "We will give you money for transit," because, as the member opposite mentioned, not all municipalities have transit. There's something different. Maybe they have bridges to fix.

**Interjection:** Sewers.

**Mr. Khalil Ramal:** Maybe they have sewers to fix. Maybe they have community centres to fix. Maybe they have a swimming pool to fix. This bill will give support for municipalities and give the flexibility to fix their infrastructure and the ability to utilize whatever they get from this province, from this government, to strengthen themselves.

I think it is a good bill. It has good intentions and good intent from our minister and our government to support the economy and municipalities. Hopefully, the members opposite will change their minds and come forward with us to support municipalities and work together—the only way that we can progress, especially in this time in which the province and all of North America face some economic challenges and a shift in the economy. Hopefully, by supporting communities and municipalities, we can prepare ourselves for the next generations. I think it is very important to support this bill and get it passed as soon as possible because municipalities are waiting for us and our support.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath):** Thank you. Before calling for questions and comments, I think it's appropriate, as is done traditionally in this House, to recognize former members. We have with us in the members' west gallery Steve Gilchrist, former member for Scarborough East in the 36th and 37th Parliaments. Welcome.

Questions and comments?

**Mrs. Julia Munro:** I am pleased to be able to stand and make a few comments on the speech that we just heard.

I think one of the problems that the members of the government continually refer to is the fact that this is going to be something very good for municipalities. Well, as members of the opposition have pointed out, nowhere in this bill are municipalities specifically delineated.

The other thing that I think is important to recognize is that of course it's good when a cheque arrives; no one is going to dispute that. But what is really important for municipalities and what they have said for years is the fact that they need some kind of predictable, dependable, and stable funding—some idea of a formula, some idea of a rationale. When a municipality wants to undertake projects, it's usually a multi-year undertaking. For the government members to use this potential tap that can be turned on or off as something that is going to be viewed by municipalities as a great opportunity is, I think, a disservice to understanding the real needs of municipalities. They have been very clear in their conversations about how important it is to have stable, rationalized funding. They have been very clear about the fact that they have to have lead-in time. There are very few projects that can begin and end with one simple cheque. So I think it's unfortunate that the government is, if you like, promoting this piece of legislation as something that will be seen by the municipalities as a huge benefit.

**Mr. Michael Prue:** I listened to the member from London—Fanshawe, and he would have us be convinced to simply vote for this bill because everything will be fine and good; to trust the government, the bill and the legislation; that the bulk or all of the money will flow to municipalities, that all of it will be used for wonderful infrastructure projects, that the auditor will be consulted and that there will be a reporting time frame.

So rather than a comment, I would have a question for the honourable member. Will the government amend the bill to assuage the fears of the opposition by, number one, including the word "municipalities", so that the money will flow to municipalities instead of to some amorphous group we can't understand, some ethereal concept that is unknown to the world? Will you amend it to include that the money is to be spent on infrastructure, so we can all be happy to see roads, bridges and sewers built with this extra money at the end of the year? Will you move the provisions of retroactivity, so it has to be done during the fiscal year in which it is spent? Last but not least, will you include a reporting time frame, so that the Auditor General can come back to the audit committee and report within a period where they can still act



upon it? If you would be willing to make those four minor concessions, I'm sure that the members of the opposition will wholeheartedly support this bill.

**Ms. Laurel C. Broten:** I'm very pleased to have a chance to comment on the thoughtful remarks of my colleague the member for London-Fanshawe on Bill 35. In my respectful submission, I think what happens with Bill 35 is that it's a continuation of the partnership we've established with municipalities since we've taken office. One of the things we have made a real commitment to is to work in partnership with our municipal leaders, who deliver services on our behalf.

That's why I was so pleased, as a member of this Legislature, to represent the city of Toronto and to hear that my mayor, David Miller, was very pleased with this. What he has said is, "The two programs the province has committed to permanently fund were to first ask of Toronto and other municipalities across Ontario during discussions around uploading"—he speaks with respect to the ODSP and ODB costs, which have been uploaded from municipalities. "The government has clearly listened and taken our concerns seriously. As we continue discussions around the upload of more services, I am hopeful the province will see the need to act quickly."

That is exactly what we are doing. Bill 35 makes it a continued partnership where, if the province is doing well and our fiscal house is more profitable than we might have expected, we're able to work in partnership with municipalities across the province and deliver on those things that our communities want. That is important because, at the end of the day, we stand in this House representing people who have elected us and sent us here. They don't really care which level of government is doing better than another. They want to know that their bridges, roads, public transit and services are being invested in. That's what this bill allows. It allows us to continue to work in partnership. It really is all about what it says—Investing in Ontario Act—because that's what our constituents expect.

**Mr. Norman W. Sterling:** I think we have a great example, where this province gave the city of Ottawa \$14.6 million on March 31. Did they spend it on infrastructure? Did it go into their reserves? No. It's going to be spent on getting rid of the snow this past winter. Instead of an increase in their taxation level of something like five points, it's going to be something less than five points because of the \$14 million.

The Liberals are forgetting—the government is forgetting—about their obligation to the taxpayer. Their obligation to the taxpayer is to draw a line between the taxpayers' money—they're entrusted with that—and being sure it is being spent according to their wishes. So they have to have strings attached. This money has no strings attached. They write cheques to the municipalities, and the municipalities can spend them for whatever they want.

I have an example of a municipality that received \$7 million for "economic development." Nobody knows

what that is. This is a municipality of about 800 people. They all love it. Of course they love it. What municipality doesn't?

I think the other part of this act which is very dangerous—and I'm not sure this is going to work for this year. We're trying to pass an act now in fiscal year 2008-09, and yet this act is trying to go back to 2007-08 and change the rules. At the federal level, they passed an act like this when Paul Martin was Prime Minister, but they did it before the end of the fiscal year. I don't think the auditor is going to stand by and let you change the rules after the year has ended. I think you're wrong, and you're wrong-headed about trying to pull this fast one in terms of changing the rules after the fiscal year has ended.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath):** The member for London-Fanshawe for a response.

**Mr. Khalil Ramal:** I want to thank the members from Beaches-East York, York-Simcoe, my colleague from Etobicoke-Lakeshore and the member from Carleton-Mississippi Mills.

I listened to the Conservatives. I don't know, but when they give us a lecture about municipalities and partnership, I think their record speaks about their past. They have a bad record and a bad past, especially when they said, "We're not in the pothole business." As a government, yes, we are in the pothole business because we want to help municipalities fix their roads and bridges. That is our responsibility as a responsible government.

Also, the member from Beaches-East York mentioned that it's not stated anywhere in this bill about our commitment, our responsibility toward municipalities. I want to give you our record. It's clear since we got elected in 2003. We committed to municipalities, from the gas tax to MIII, to help them with infrastructure, building bridges and roads. In many years, in every budget, there's some money for municipalities because we believe strongly, as I mentioned in my speech, in our responsibility to have a good relationship, a good partnership. Can we go back to our record? We committed to that, and our record proves our commitment and our history.

I guess our time is almost over. I want to tell you that this bill is a very important bill because it shows our commitment to municipalities. It gives us the ability to continue our mission, working hand in hand with municipalities across the province of Ontario. As I mentioned, rural and urban, small and large, they need our support. We are in this House for them. Only by working together can we have a stronger province. Despite what everybody says, it's a great bill, and hopefully everybody will change their mind and support it.

*Second reading debate deemed adjourned.*

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath):** The time having expired for debate, this House now stands adjourned until tomorrow, April 8, at 1:30 p.m.

*The House adjourned at 2133.*

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**Legislative Assembly  
of Ontario**

First Session, 39<sup>th</sup> Parliament

**Assemblée législative  
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Première session, 39<sup>e</sup> législature

**Official Report  
of Debates  
(Hansard)**

**Journal  
des débats  
(Hansard)**

**Tuesday 8 April 2008**

**Mardi 8 avril 2008**

Speaker  
Honourable Steve Peters

Président  
L'honorable Steve Peters

Clerk  
Deborah Deller

Greffière  
Deborah Deller



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## LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 8 April 2008

## ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 8 avril 2008

*The House met at 1330.  
Prayers.*

### MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

#### HOSPITAL SERVICES

**Mr. John O'Toole:** I rise today in support of the future of the emergency services available at the Cottage Hospital in Uxbridge, in my riding of Durham. Last October, during the provincial election, the Liberal candidate, Betty Somerville, made a complete and open commitment to ensuring that, if she was elected, the emergency would remain open and fully staffed. I was supportive of that, as was the community. In December, this House received a petition signed by 18,387 citizens in response to the fear that the Uxbridge hospital would lose its emergency department and other local health services, let alone the difficulty of recruiting doctors.

I'm disappointed that, three months later, media reports are saying that the ER staff shortage could be worse this summer than last. This shortage is due in part to scheduled vacations, doctors going on leave, and the continuing shortages of doctors themselves. It's also due to the failure of this government to adequately address the doctor shortage across the province of Ontario.

I'll continue to keep in touch with Uxbridge mayor Bob Shepherd; Dr. Michael Damus, the chief of staff at Uxbridge; Janet Beed, president and CEO of the Markham Stouffville Hospital; and Roger Peirson, volunteer chair of the Uxbridge physician recruitment committee.

The community is doing everything possible to keep the ER open, to support the local hospital and recruit new doctors, but they can't do it alone. I ask the Premier and the Minister of Health to step up to the job and fulfill your promises. Keep the Uxbridge hospital—

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Thank you.

#### HOUSE SITTINGS HEURES DE SÉANCE

**Ms. Lisa MacLeod:** Yesterday marked the first evening sitting of the 39th Parliament. This is five months after the Legislature unanimously endorsed my idea of making Queen's Park more family friendly, and four months after I requested the Liberals act on this endorsement.

The Liberals are either supportive of making Queen's Park more family friendly or they are not.

Les libéraux ou offrent leur « support » pour rendre Queen's Park plus amical aux familles ou ils ne l'offrent pas. Leurs actions ou manque d'actions parlent plus fort que leurs mots.

Their actions, or lack of actions, speak louder than words.

To date, the Liberals have just paid lip service to making politics more family friendly for the men and women in this Legislature. The Liberals have broken their promise by reconvening night sittings and by ignoring the panel that they set up to make this place more family friendly.

I urge the Liberals to get serious, to respect the Legislature's wishes, and to get to work and make this place more family friendly.

I would be remiss not to acknowledge the visitors today from Equal Voice Canada that we're going to receive at the House, at the reception that they'll be hosting today after proceedings.

#### HOSPITALS OF ONTARIO PENSION PLAN

**Mr. David Zimmer:** I would like to welcome to the House today members of the hospitals of Ontario pension plan, or, as many of us call it, HOOPP.

HOOPP is the pension plan for retired Ontario health care workers. This plan is notable in that its founding in 1960 predates the Canada pension plan and the old age security. At the launch, there were only 79 participating employers, with fewer than 10,000 members and several hundred pensioners. Over the years this plan has grown. Today, close to 250,000 people in Ontario, including the vast majority of nurses who are covered by a pension plan, depend on HOOPP for their pension benefits.

While our government continues to work on the issue of human health resources, I was interested in learning that HOOPP plays a role in this by assisting with the recruitment and retention of health care professionals in Ontario. It is comforting to know that workers in the health care field have a pension plan with a proven track record of solid management and a good return on investment.

Mr Speaker, I hope you and, indeed, all members of this House will join me in welcoming the members of the hospitals of Ontario pension plan to the House today. Welcome, HOOPP.



## VISITORS

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** I would like to take this opportunity, because the class will have to leave a little earlier, on behalf of the member from Mississauga South to welcome the grade 5 students from St. Edmund school. They are seated in the west gallery. Welcome to Queen's Park today.

## HEALTH PREMIUMS

**Mr. Toby Barrett:** Tonight we debate a motion calling for the review of the infamous tax that broke the promise-breakers' back, the so-called health tax.

Four and a half years ago, then Liberal leader McGuinty stared through our TV screens and told us, "I won't raise your taxes," before signing the taxpayers' protection pledge. Once elected, the man who became known as Pinocchio turned his back on his pledge, introduced the biggest—

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Again, we're trying to maintain some decorum here. Use of words that cause an uproar in the House do a disservice to all of us. I ask that you withdraw the comment.

**Mr. Toby Barrett:** I withdraw.

He turned his back on his pledge and introduced the biggest single hike in the history of Ontario, and set us on a course of serial promise-breaking and commitment-killing that has cemented the legacy of the man who would be king.

In the wake of the 2004 budget boondoggle and its infamous tax, the Premier's promise-breaking inspired those across the province to let this government know what they thought of an elected official who promised change and then changed his mind.

As a member of the truth squad, I recall signs and slogans on the Queen's Park lawn, where taxpayers found their voices: "Caution: Serial promise-breaker on the loose." True to form, the Premier has told us that while he promised this review when he introduced the tax, he'd already decided nothing will change. Promise-breaking will remain alive and well in this province.

1340

## HEPATITIS C

**M<sup>me</sup> France Gélinas:** Ontarians who were victims of tainted blood want to know why money is left over in the Ontario hepatitis C assistance plan. This plan was set up to provide financial assistance to hep C victims outside the 1986-90 window. Two hundred million dollars was set aside to compensate these individuals, and \$25,000 was given to the 3,700 who qualified, leaving \$108 million unspent.

In my riding, we have an advocate extraordinaire who this month put up \$5,000 of his own money to launch a health promotion campaign on hep C, the Break the Silence and Win contest. Mr. Ernie Zivny says the prov-

incial government has a moral obligation to treat all Ontario hep C victims of tainted blood in a fair and equal manner regardless of when they contracted the disease. He says it's not only the federal government that's to blame for the tainted blood but the Ontario government bears responsibility too.

So what to make of the \$108 million left unspent in the plan? Victims of tainted blood want to know why this government didn't use all the money originally promised to help Ontarians with hep C. They want to know why, 10 years after the plan was first introduced, millions are left unspent.

Ontarians living with hep C shouldn't have to wait for answers because they've waited too long already. Their health is not getting any better and the least we can do is give them the assistance that they need. As Ernie Zivny says, it's simply the right thing to do.

WOMEN'S REPRESENTATION  
IN PROVINCIAL PARLIAMENT

**Mrs. Maria Van Bommel:** I'm delighted to rise today to welcome Equal Voice to the Ontario Legislature. They are here to celebrate more women—more women candidates in 2007, more women in the Legislature and more women historically than ever before. Equal Voice, Canada's multi-partisan organization, aims to create a climate of change in which more women are elected to government in Canada and in Ontario.

Equal Voice data show that when women run, they win, as demonstrated by the number of female members elected in 2007. It also shows that parties need to be proactive in recruiting as well as training more women candidates. The McGuinty Liberals have done just that. This past election, the Ontario Liberals not only met their commitment with regard to female candidates, they exceeded it. In fact, more than one third of the total number of Liberal candidates were women. And in 2007, the number of women elected to Queen's Park reached the historic milestone of 27%.

As chair of the Ontario women's Liberal caucus, I have the privilege of working with some of Ontario's most insightful politicians.

All of us, men and women, must take responsibility for achieving the goal of more women. We must encourage more women to get involved and take part in shaping the future of Ontario for generations to come. To that end, I encourage all MPPs to attend tonight's Equal Voice reception, to show their support for all the women of the Legislature, past, present and future.

## LORETTO CONVENT

**Mrs. Liz Sandals:** Last week in my riding of Guelph, I was pleased to announce that Guelph will receive \$5 million from the MIII fund to restore the Loretto Convent building into a new home for the Guelph Civic Museum. This project is so important to the constituents of my

riding that the announcement was called a “magic moment” by the Guelph Mercury.

The Loretto Convent, one of several historic buildings surrounding Guelph’s magnificent Church of Our Lady on Catholic Hill, was slated for demolition. The city said that this project to save the convent could only go ahead if upper-tier governments contributed \$6 million. The federal government committed \$1 million. With the province’s \$5-million contribution, we have reached the magic number.

The \$450-million MIII fund was unique because it allowed municipalities to apply for cultural infrastructure instead of just roads and bridges.

My constituents are thrilled that this funding from the province will allow the Loretto Convent to be completely restored to its former glory and that we will be able to house a museum twice as big as the one at the current site, with more staff and more programming. This is great news for Guelph.

### COMMUNITY SERVICES

**Mr. Mario Sergio:** I’m very pleased to announce that in the past week, the Liberal government has invested over \$2,121,000 in valuable resources assisting the constituents of York West.

I proudly announce that the Philip Aziz Centre was the recipient of over \$2 million. A children’s hospice, the Philip Aziz Centre provides practical, physical, emotional and spiritual support for people living with HIV/AIDS, cancer and other life-threatening illnesses.

Another project, the Jane-Finch Caring Village, received over \$100,000. This organization has under its umbrella the city parks and recreation, the community health centres, the school board and York University faculty.

The Hincks-Dellcrest Treatment Centre and the Conflict Mediation Services of Downsview, two other worthy recipients, received over \$53,000.

I’m proud that the McGuinty government’s mandate is prioritizing those in greatest need. Funding allocation is justly flowing not only to facilitate our young people’s success but to the destitute and those who do not have a voice but who desperately need to be heard.

Again, my gratitude and congratulations to all these community groups who do such an outstanding job in my riding and continue to provide good, quality service to all our citizens in the riding of York West.

### ONTARIO BUDGET

**Mr. Bill Mauro:** I’m pleased to acknowledge two important initiatives in our budget that will greatly assist our seniors and hard-working business owners in Thunder Bay–Atikokan.

A new property tax grant is making it easier for more Ontario seniors to stay in their homes. The 2008 budget includes a new property tax grant for seniors with low and moderate incomes who own their own homes.

During our last term we increased the tax credit by 25%, from \$500 to \$625. Under the new plan, up to \$250 more will be made available to approximately 550,000 seniors by 2009. By 2010, this new tax grant will rise to \$500. When combined with the existing property and sales tax credit to seniors, some seniors could see up to \$1,075 in total tax relief in 2009, and up to \$1,325 in 2010. This is just one more example of how our government is working for seniors.

We are also accelerating business education tax rate cuts for northern businesses over the next three years, which will save businesses in Thunder Bay over \$25 million in tax savings, another \$216,000 in Oliver Paipoonge and almost \$90,000 in Atikokan. Overall, rates will be reduced more quickly in 85 northern municipalities, benefiting more than 30,000 businesses, resulting in total savings of more than \$70 million over the next three years.

We are also investing in innovation and lowering business costs.

All of these initiatives combine a vision for our province that seeks to assist the most vulnerable, while at the same time expanding economic opportunities for all, to spur investment, growth and jobs.

### INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

#### ONTARIO FRENCH-LANGUAGE EDUCATIONAL COMMUNICATIONS AUTHORITY ACT, 2008

#### LOI DE 2008 SUR L’OFFICE DES TÉLÉCOMMUNICATIONS ÉDUCATIVES DE LANGUE FRANÇAISE DE L’ONTARIO

Ms. Wynne moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 55, An Act to enact the Ontario French-language Educational Communications Authority Act, 2008 and make complementary amendments to the Ontario Educational Communications Authority Act / *Projet de loi 55, Loi édictant la Loi de 2008 sur l’Office des télécommunications éducatives de langue française de l’Ontario et apportant des modifications complémentaires à la Loi sur l’Office de la télécommunication éducative de l’Ontario.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

*First reading agreed to.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** The minister for a short statement.

**Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne:** In ministerial statements, please.



## MOTIONS

## HOUSE SITTINGS

**Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne:** Pursuant to standing order 9(c)(i), the House shall meet from 6:45 p.m. to 9:30 p.m. on Tuesday, April 8, 2008, for the purpose of considering government business.

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour will say "aye."

All those opposed will say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

*The division bells rang from 1350 to 1355.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** All those in favour will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

## Ayes

Aggelonitis, Sophia  
Albanese, Laura  
Arthurs, Wayne  
Balkissoon, Bas  
Bentley, Christopher  
Brown, Michael A.  
Bryant, Michael  
Cansfield, Donna H.  
Carroll, Aileen  
Colle, Mike  
Craitor, Kim  
Crozier, Bruce  
Delaney, Bob  
Dhillon, Vic  
Dickson, Joe  
Dombrowsky, Leona

Duguid, Brad  
Flynn, Kevin Daniel  
Fonseca, Peter  
Gravelle, Michael  
Hoy, Pat  
Jaczek, Helena  
Lalonde, Jean-Marc  
Levac, Dave  
Mangat, Amrit  
Matthews, Deborah  
Mauro, Bill  
Meilleur, Madeleine  
Milloy, John  
Mitchell, Carol  
Naqvi, Yasir  
Pupatello, Sandra

Qaadri, Shafiq  
Ramal, Khalil  
Ramsay, David  
Rinaldi, Lou  
Ruprecht, Tony  
Sandals, Liz  
Sergio, Mario  
Smith, Monique  
Smitherman, George  
Sorbara, Greg  
Sousa, Charles  
Takhar, Harinder S.  
Van Bommel, Maria  
Watson, Jim  
Wynne, Kathleen O.  
Zimmer, David

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** All those opposed will rise one at a time to be recognized by the Clerk.

## Nays

Arnott, Ted  
Bailey, Robert  
Barrett, Toby  
DiNovo, Cheri  
Elliott, Christine  
Gélinas, France  
Hardeman, Ernie  
Hillier, Randy  
Horwath, Andrea

Hudak, Tim  
Jones, Sylvia  
Kormos, Peter  
MacLeod, Lisa  
Miller, Norm  
Miller, Paul  
Munro, Julia  
Murdoch, Bill  
O'Toole, John

Prue, Michael  
Runciman, Robert W.  
Savoline, Joyce  
Scott, Laurie  
Shurman, Peter  
Tabuns, Peter  
Witmer, Elizabeth  
Yakubski, John

**The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller):** The ayes are 48; the nays are 26.

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** I declare the motion carried.

*Agreed to.*

## LEGISLATIVE PAGES

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** I beg the indulgence of the members to allow the pages time to assemble for introduction.

I would ask all members to join me in welcoming this group of legislative pages serving the first session of the 39th Parliament: Alex Ballagh, Simcoe-Grey; Marco

Bellissimo, York Centre; Lucas Bongers, Leeds-Grenville; Kelsey Fedus, Hamilton Mountain; Marcus Glenie, Whitby-Oshawa; Thomas Grainger, London North Centre; Jordynne Hislop, Simcoe North; Victoria Jennings, Parkdale-High Park; Bethany Jones, Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound; Rheanna Kendrick, Thunder Bay-Atikokan; Georgia LaMarre, Essex; Adam Laskaris, Don Valley West; Michael Louws, Durham; Ida Mahmoudi, Don Valley East; Sarah Palmeter, Ajax-Pickering; Prakash Pandya, Windsor West; Paul Sebastian, Mississauga South; Laura Shum, Wellington-Halton Hills; and Michael Thomas-Fulford, Trinity-Spadina.

Welcome to the pages.

1400

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY  
AND RESPONSES

## TFO

**L'hon. Kathleen O. Wynne:** TFO est un exceptionnel atout pour les élèves et les enseignantes et enseignants francophones qui enrichit l'expérience en salle de classe.

Au-delà de la salle de classe, TFO enrichit la culture franco-ontarienne. Et si la culture franco-ontarienne est enrichie, la culture ontarienne est enrichie. Les commentaires sur TFO que nous recevons des intervenants francophones sont extraordinairement positifs. En effet, TFO est considéré par beaucoup, dont moi-même, comme une ressource indispensable au personnel enseignant, aux élèves et aux parents d'expression française.

Il est important d'appuyer l'apprentissage en français avec des ressources en dehors de la salle de classe. C'est important parce qu'il n'y a simplement pas autant de ressources externes pour les élèves et les enseignantes et enseignants en français qu'en anglais. C'est là que TFO répond à certains besoins bien spécifiques. Mais TFO n'est pas simplement un outil d'apprentissage. C'est aussi une institution à la base même de l'identité et de la vitalité culturelle franco-ontariennes.

That's why I am pleased to rise in the House today to introduce legislation that would, if passed, formally complete the process of making TFO into an independent entity. It's a very good thing.

Notre gouvernement a pris l'engagement pour un TFO indépendant il y a deux ans, et ce projet de loi est la dernière étape nécessaire pour officialiser l'indépendance de TFO par rapport à TVOntario. Grâce à un décret pris en avril dernier, TFO a son propre budget, son propre conseil d'administration et ses propres bureaux. TFO est devenu une partie intégrante de la stratégie d'éducation et de la politique d'aménagement linguistique de notre gouvernement.

TFO is focused on meeting the needs of Franco-Ontarian students by integrating its television program-

ming, multimedia content and website into a seamless offering of resources, and by filling the gaps between the needs of students and teachers and the resources available in our schools.

This includes making 4,000 educational television programs available to French-language schools, 1,600 of these for free over the Internet, and making 225 pedagogical guides available to teachers through the TFO website free of charge.

L'une de ces ressources est une aide en ligne appelée SOS Devoirs. Je crois comprendre que près de 90 000 élèves, de plus de 350 écoles, ont utilisé ce service l'année dernière. La bibliothèque virtuelle de SOS Devoirs est une mine d'informations, de liens, d'images et d'exercices que les élèves francophones auraient beaucoup de mal à trouver ailleurs au monde.

Ce n'est là qu'un exemple de la façon dont TFO est d'une aide précieuse aux enseignants, aux élèves et aux parents, et c'est pourquoi l'adoption de ce projet de loi visant à officialiser l'indépendance de TFO est si importante. Nous voulons que TFO continue à offrir des ressources qui répondent aux besoins uniques des élèves francophones. Autrement dit, nous voulons rendre l'indépendance de TFO permanente afin d'appuyer nos élèves, nos parents et notre personnel enseignant franco-ontariens.

#### TFO

**L'hon. Madeleine Meilleur:** C'est une journée extrêmement importante pour les francophones de l'Ontario.

Ma collègue et ministre de l'Éducation, l'honorable Kathleen Wynne, dépose un projet de loi qui fera de TFO une entité autonome. Je veux la remercier de m'avoir permis de parler sur ce sujet aujourd'hui.

Ce projet de loi est essentiel pour que les écoles de langue française soient fortes et dynamiques. La loi proposée est essentielle à la réussite scolaire des apprenantes et apprenants de langue française en Ontario, et elle est essentielle à la préservation du riche patrimoine culturel de l'Ontario.

Nous avons donc besoin d'un TFO solide et autonome, qui sera la pierre angulaire des progrès continus que nous réalisons en éducation en langue française, et nous en avons réalisé beaucoup. Nous avons éliminé les obstacles artificiels entre les écoles et l'éducation et la formation postsecondaires de langue française.

La récente expansion de la Direction des politiques et programmes d'éducation en langue française, qui inclut maintenant le ministère de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités de l'Ontario, est un grand exemple de cette élimination.

Nous avons aussi élargi l'accès aux études postsecondaires des étudiants et étudiantes francophones du nord-est de l'Ontario, en appuyant la construction du nouveau campus du Collège Boréal à Timmins.

Enfin, nous avons récemment affecté 1 \$ million au financement initial destiné à améliorer la sensibilisation à l'éducation en langue française en Ontario.

La population francophone de l'Ontario est fière des programmes offerts par TFO. Pour la communauté franco-ontarienne, TFO nous a donné plus qu'un moyen d'information. La chaîne a aussi donné à la francophonie ontarienne une voix et une identité : une voix grâce à laquelle nous communiquons avec les autres communautés francophones de l'Ontario; une voix par laquelle nous exprimons notre identité spécifique et nous nous faisons connaître aux francophones du monde entier. Cette identité est la synthèse de ce que la francophonie ontarienne a de mieux à offrir, une identité propre dont la diversité régionale et culturelle est reflétée dans les émissions et les reportages audacieux de TFO.

Nous avons besoin de TFO pour continuer de concevoir d'excellents programmes et contenus multimédias en français.

Nous devons continuer de diffuser la langue et la culture françaises aux quatre coins de l'Ontario. Nous devons continuer d'offrir des ressources qui répondent aux besoins uniques des élèves francophones.

Si ce projet de loi est adopté, il accordera son autonomie à TFO et fournira un meilleur soutien à nos élèves. Il s'agit d'un important pas en avant tant pour les élèves et leurs parents que pour la vitalité culturelle de la province.

#### METIS NATION

#### NATION MÉTISSE

**L'hon. Michael Bryant:** C'est aujourd'hui le moment le plus historique et important pour la Nation Métisse et pour M. le président, Tony Belcourt.

It is with great pleasure that I rise today to tell you about the Ontario government's new, important historic moment with the Metis Nation of Ontario. One hundred and thirty-eight years ago, this Legislature placed a bounty on the head of Louis Riel. It's hard to believe: an elected member of Parliament and a great leader of the Metis Nation, and this Legislature put a bounty on his head.

Fast forward to 2008. Today, the Ontario government is a friend and a partner with the Metis Nation of Ontario.

#### 1410

At the request of the Metis leadership, today we are launching formal discussions with the Metis Nation of Ontario to develop a new and historic framework agreement based on the principles of respect and partnership.

Today, we stand next to one another to honour the culture, language and heritage of Metis people in Ontario. We're taking the next steps to further strengthen our joint commitment to improving the well-being and prosperity of Metis communities and all Ontarians.

Working in collaboration with the Metis Nation of Ontario, together we are identifying the priorities and approaches necessary in order to recognize the distinct



needs of Metis in Ontario, as noted in the Ipperwash Inquiry Report recommendations.

Le respect, la reconnaissance et la réconciliation sont les principes qui orientent l'approche adoptée par le gouvernement de l'Ontario concernant la Nation Metisse.

A key step in developing this bilateral framework agreement recognizes the historic and ongoing contributions of Metis people in Ontario. By doing this, we are seeking to help ensure a better quality of life for current and future members of the Metis community across the province.

We are also pleased to provide the capacity needed; in particular, an additional \$200,000 to support the work on developing the framework within the existing bilateral relationship, in addition to the \$5 million invested annually and provided to the Metis Nation of Ontario primarily for programs and services.

Today also, I'm very pleased to recognize the contributions of the outgoing president of the Metis Nation of Ontario, Tony Belcourt, who is here with us today. Mr. Belcourt has worked tirelessly for his beliefs and has been a strong and passionate advocate of Metis people. Recently, he announced his retirement and has been honoured by the Metis National Council with an appointment as ambassador for the Metis Nation.

Tony Belcourt will undoubtedly be remembered as one of the most influential members of the Metis community in Ontario and for his many achievements, including the instrumental role he played in founding the Metis Nation of Ontario almost 15 years ago.

Many of the people in this House have worked with president Tony Belcourt over at least the past 15 years of his leadership of the Metis Nation of Ontario. I have had the opportunity to do so as well. I know all members share not only in offering him sincere thanks for his leadership and best wishes, but also, to Mr. Belcourt, a grateful Ontario thanks you.

## CULTURAL FUNDING

### SUBVENTIONS CULTURELLES

**Hon. M. Aileen Carroll:** Ontario's prosperity depends on developing our most innovative sectors. The entertainment and cluster sector is at the heart of Ontario's knowledge-based economy. Investing in arts and culture is part of our government's five-point plan to strengthen the economy and enhance Ontario's competitiveness.

Grâce à des investissements dans les secteurs caractérisés par une croissance, comme les industries du divertissement et de la création, le gouvernement stimule notre économie et améliore la qualité de vie des Ontariennes et Ontariens.

Culture is a key economic sector in Ontario—by GDP, by employment and as a driver for tourism. The culture sector generates almost \$20 billion of Ontario's gross domestic product. At 4.2% of the GDP, culture is a bigger contributor to the Ontario economy than agri-

culture, fishing, mining, oil and gas extraction and utilities combined.

I'm pleased to tell you that in the past 10 years, employment in the entertainment and creative cluster has grown at twice the rate as the overall Ontario economy, creating 80,000 net new jobs. In fact, here in Ontario, cultural industries are the third largest in North America by employment, after only California and New York. Cultural institutions such as the ROM, the AGO, the McMichael art gallery and the National Ballet attract visitors from across the country and indeed from around the world to our fair province. Ontario's cultural tourism generates more than \$4.5 billion annually—that's just in tourism—across Ontario.

Our government is taking bold steps to ensure that this sector continues to thrive. That's why in our budget, funding to the Ministry of Culture has been increased by \$63 million over the next four years.

Ceci permettra à notre gouvernement de continuer à soutenir des organismes comme le Conseil des arts de l'Ontario et la Fondation Trillium de l'Ontario—deux agences qui soutiennent et stimulent le développement artistique à travers l'Ontario. Cette augmentation nous permettra de mettre l'accent sur des secteurs clés que nous avons ciblés aux fins d'une croissance éventuelle.

For example, we will be enhancing the highly successful Ontario interactive digital media tax credit, which helps Ontario corporations create and distribute interactive digital media products. To further support digital media, our government, in our budget, is investing \$7 million over the next four years to expand the interactive digital media fund, which helps producers create market-ready digital products. This is one of many funds delivered by my ministry's agency, the Ontario Media Development Corp. Such funds will ensure that digital media will continue to be an economic driver in Ontario and keep us on the leading edge internationally.

To help promote Ontario culture at home and abroad, the Premier announced yesterday that our government is investing \$15 million to maximize the long-term success of the Luminato Festival for Arts and Creativity.

L'édition inaugurale du festival Luminato a attiré plus d'un million de visiteurs dans plus de 100 événements organisés dans toute la ville de Toronto et a contribué à l'économie à la hauteur de plus de 78 \$ millions.

By supporting the development of our cultural industries and our best creative talent, we are helping to ensure that Ontario remains competitive in that global entertainment marketplace. The 2008 budget underscores this government's belief that culture is not only about who we are and who we want to be, and necessary for the quality of life of people in Ontario, but is also critical to help in growing our economy.

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Responses?

TFO

**Mr. Peter Shurman:** I will be responding to Ministers Wynne, Meilleur and Carroll today.



C'est ma première opportunité de parler comme critique des Affaires francophones pour le Parti conservateur. Je veux dire que je suis très heureux de savoir que le gouvernement a maintenant l'intention de considérer la TFO comme entité séparée et unique dans le domaine de la télévision pour la communauté francophone de l'Ontario.

Je pense que c'est quelque chose que nos francophones peuvent célébrer, parce qu'il est enfin clair que nous avons une communauté propre ici. Les Ontariens francophones sont une partie de l'histoire originale de notre province et ils vont être bien servis avec un service unique et excellent.

J'avais l'opportunité il y a plusieurs semaines de visiter le nouveau siège social de TFO. J'étais très impressionné par la qualité de l'équipement technique et la qualité des productions. Mais plus que cela, je m'intéressais bien à rencontrer les membres de l'équipe TFO. Je pense que, comme d'habitude, la qualité des gens qui travaillent là est la plus grande ressource à TFO.

Je suis né à Montréal et j'ai appris à parler le français là, mais j'avais perdu la plupart de ma capacité récemment. Mais j'ai commencé à renouveler mon habileté dans la langue française, et une des sources premières pour pratiquer, pour moi, était un programme de TFO, le Panorama. Alors, le Parti conservateur attendra recevoir les détails de ce nouveau projet de loi, comme d'habitude, mais j'applaudie l'idée et je félicite la TFO comme organisme exceptionnel et, bientôt, comme entité unique, nouvelle et indépendante.

1420

#### CULTURAL FUNDING

**Mr. Peter Shurman:** I want to comment now in regard to announcements made by the Minister of Culture. No doubt, culture is the glue that binds a society, so I won't speak against giving it a boost. In the recent provincial budget, it was announced that the provincial government intends to increase funding to the Ministry of Culture by \$63 million over the next four years. The \$63 million represents a sizable increase in this ministry's budget; in other words, a lot of glue. We have to take care with just how we apply that glue and in what quantity.

By the government's own estimate, job growth in the entertainment and creative cluster outpaced the rest of the economy. This is a relative position. I don't believe this was due to particularly remarkable performance in this sector, but rather to extremely poor performance in all other sectors of the Ontario economy.

In the days since the provincial budget was read in this chamber, the government has been on a spending spree: \$15 million for the Luminato festival, \$12 million in one-time funding for the ROM, \$10 million to expand the Toronto Reference Library. These are all excellent festivals and organizations, and I commend the minister for recognizing their importance and the importance of the cultural sector in our quality of life here in Ontario. How-

ever, I question the wisdom of increasing the budget of this ministry by \$63 million at a time when the Ontario economy can ill afford it.

I also question the government's continued practice of providing one-off funding to those in need. It denies reliable annual funds to any organization on the receiving end. If this government were serious about helping our cultural sector, it would provide frugal, smartly targeted, sustainable investments. Instead, we get the same tired Liberal practice of money being thrown at issues with no real hope of long-term, positive impact. I wonder if slush funding has found its way into culture. The people of Ontario deserve better.

#### METIS NATION

**Mr. Norm Miller:** It's my pleasure today to welcome representatives of the Metis Nation of Ontario to the Ontario Legislature; in particular, outgoing President Tony Belcourt, who has been serving the Metis Nation of Ontario for some 14 years, since May 4, 1994. Congratulations, Tony, and thank you for your service.

I would also like to welcome other members of the delegation representing the Metis Nation of Ontario, including Chair Gary Lipinski, who I understand is going to be in an election, coming up in May, to replace Tony. I'm sure he'll do well at that.

Tony, I understand from Garfield that your golf game is already pretty good. But it will probably improve, now that you have a little more time on your hands.

Congratulations on launching discussions to negotiate a new framework agreement with the Ontario government. I know it is very important to the Metis Nation of Ontario to be recognized by the Ontario government.

#### CULTURAL FUNDING

**Mr. Peter Tabuns:** There's no question that the cultural sector, the arts sector in this province, deserves support. It's unfortunate that what the cultural sector needed was a great novel, and what it got was a very short story. What it needed was a fully staged opera, and what it got was a very brief duet.

The reality is that we have a film sector in this province, in this city, that needs ongoing, sustainable, predictable support. What they got was a tax break they had fought very hard for, but which is time limited to the end of 2009. There are investments being made in my riding: Filmport, a major studio that needs to be able to book for years, not just into the next calendar year. The decision not to make that ongoing funding was a mistake.

I want to talk as well about the rest of the arts sector. The retail sales tax exemption for tickets for theatres under 3,200 seats is a small step, a useful step. But the reality—the minister knows this, because I know she has gone to arts receptions and has talked to people in the arts—is that the theatre sector in this province is facing crushing burdens in terms of capital and in terms of



operating. Those burdens have not been lifted by this budget.

The performing arts in Ontario, in Toronto, face tremendous difficulty. That difficulty has not been lifted. They deserve much better; they should have gotten it from you.

#### TFO

**M<sup>me</sup> France Gélinas:** Moi aussi, le 26 mars dernier, j'ai eu l'honneur et le privilège de participer à l'ouverture officielle des nouveaux locaux de TFO. C'était un événement très attendu par la communauté francophone. M<sup>me</sup> Gisèle Chrétien, la présidente de TFO—une bonne résidente de Nickel Belt, je dois rajouter—rayonnait de plaisir. C'était un bel événement.

Mais ça n'a pas été facile. Tous les membres de l'Ontario français ont revendiqué longtemps avant d'être entendus, mais ce soir-là c'était la fête. On célébrait l'indépendance de TFO. Pour la population francophone, il est important de célébrer ces petites victoires, parce qu'elles ne sont ni nombreuses ni fréquentes. Les membres de l'équipe de TFO, la télévision éducative et culturelle de l'Ontario français, peuvent maintenant travailler en français. Ils ont eu leur indépendance, mais pour vraiment bien représenter l'Ontario français, ils auraient besoin d'une subvention suffisante pour être capables d'ouvrir des locaux à l'extérieur de Toronto. Sudbury, je suis sûre, serait une bonne place pour eux. Comme je l'ai mentionné à la ministre des Affaires francophones, c'était un bel événement.

Par contre, la route demeure longue pour les Franco-Ontariens et Franco-Ontariennes, qui ont compris depuis longtemps que pour survivre et s'épanouir, ils ont besoin de leurs propres institutions. TFO, c'est un pas de plus, mais la route est encore longue.

#### METIS NATION

**Mr. Howard Hampton:** Let me first of all welcome all the representatives of the Metis Nation of Ontario to the Legislature today; most of all, Tony Belcourt, and one of my constituents, Gary Lipinski.

I know they have worked very long and very hard over a number of years, with successive provincial governments, to try to have Metis rights recognized and the interests of Metis people recognized, and so I want to congratulate them on today's announcement.

All aboriginal peoples in Ontario need to be treated with respect and recognition when dealing with governments, both the Ontario government and the federal government, and I want to say to the Metis Nation of Ontario that we wish you every success in these discussions.

However, I must note that when the minister was asked by members of the media about the content of the discussions, his response was that in the proposed discussions a variety of issues would be discussed. I hope you are able to nail him down more than the media have been able to today.

I also want to say to the government, though, that the government's track record with First Nations is not very good. The message that has been received by First Nations communities across northern Ontario is that if they dare to speak out against mining exploration or mining development in their traditional territory, they may wind up in jail. That is very much the message that has been received. So I say to the government that I hope you conduct these discussions better, and with more effectiveness, than you have failed to conduct consultation and accommodation of First Nations in the far north.

#### VISITORS

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** There are a few individuals I would like to recognize. First, I want to thank members for their co-operation in providing these to me. I would just let you know as well that inside your desks is a little standardized form; I thank the member from Parkdale–High Park for using it. Those are available to you, and I would appreciate receiving them as early as possible.

I would like to introduce some guests, on behalf of the members. On behalf of the member from Parkdale–High Park, seated in the west members' gallery are Kalsang Tsomo, Kunga Chotak and Salden Kunga, from the Tibetan Association of Ontario. Welcome to Queen's Park.

On behalf of the member from Kenora–Rainy River, seated in the west members' gallery is Mr. Martin Devine, an activist within the disabled community. Welcome, Mr. Devine.

#### 1430

In the west gallery, we'd like to welcome Mr. Tim Grainger, the father of page Tom Grainger. We welcome you here today as well.

On behalf of the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs, seated in the east members' gallery are Mr. Tony Belcourt, president of the Metis Nation of Ontario; Mr. Gary Lipinski, provisional council of the Metis Nation; France Picotte, provisional council of the Metis Nation; Reta Gordon, provisional council, Metis Nation; Tim Pile, secretary treasurer of the Metis Nation; Sharon McBride, Ontario region 8 councillor; Pierre Lefebvre, executive director, Metis Nation of Ontario; Hank Rowlinson, senior policy analyst; Katelin Peltier, director of communications; and Doug Wilson, director of health. Welcome to Queen's Park today.

#### ORAL QUESTIONS

##### EXECUTIVE COMPENSATION

**Mr. Robert W. Runciman:** My question is for the Premier. Your government created the Ontario Power Authority in 2004. At the time, your then Minister of Energy, Mr. Duncan, described it as "a highly efficient,

virtual agency" that will only have 10 to 15 employees. There are now 100 employees and 51 of them are making over \$100,000 a year. Premier, how do you justify bloating this bureaucracy when, today, we hear your government is firing nurses and closing hospital beds?

**Hon. Dalton McGuinty:** First of all, just to set the record straight, we are certainly not closing hospitals. That was done under the Conservative government. And we're not firing nurses; in fact, we're hiring them by the thousands. They fired them by the thousands. Just so we're clear on that score.

Let me just take the opportunity to say something about the Ontario Power Authority. It assumes a very important responsibility on behalf of the people of Ontario. For one thing, it has in place a plan to deliver on a 20-year power supply plan to make sure we have a continual, reliable, affordable, environmentally safe supply of power during the course of the next 20 years. They're also very effective at driving our shared conservation agenda.

I know it's easy to criticize in the abstract, but I think it's important for Ontarians to understand exactly what this authority does for all of us: Make sure the lights stay on and make sure we're driving hard on a conservation agenda.

**Mr. Robert W. Runciman:** Speaker, I don't know if you heard an explanation there for the original indication of staff numbers; I certainly didn't.

Another example, Premier, of your profligate approach to governing is the Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corp. After giving their fired CEO a \$720,000 going-away present, after a significant decline in revenues, we hear of a 107% increase in the number of \$100,000-plus earners. As well, the VP's salary just last year jumped 20%.

You're telling hard-working Ontarians to steel themselves against an economic slowdown, you're firing nurses and closing hospital beds while at the same time fattening the bureaucracy and doling out executive salary increases at 10 times the rate of inflation. How do you justify that?

**Hon. Dalton McGuinty:** Again, we are not closing hospitals; they did that. We are not firing nurses; they did that.

It would be helpful for non-partisan observers if we were to cut to the chase on this matter. What the Conservatives believe is that in order for us to address our shared economic challenge, we should cut \$5 billion out of government revenue. That's what they believe. In order to arrive at that figure, we would have to close hospitals, fire nurses, underfund our schools, underfund our colleges and universities and drive up tuition fees. We would have to cut supports for our most vulnerable members of our extended Ontario family. That's what they're saying we have to do; we won't do that.

We have in place a plan to find an additional \$1 billion in savings. We found \$800 million last year; we'll find \$1 billion this year, but we'll do it in a way that doesn't compromise public services.

**Mr. Robert W. Runciman:** I'll remind viewers again, still no answers to the questions. I'll give the Premier a few more examples. The CEO of LCBO saw his salary increase 22% this year; the vice-president of merchandising at LCBO saw his salary increase 19%; the CEO of the Toronto Centre LHIN, the local health integration network, a whopping 75% pay increase; the salary of the president of the WSIB—I should mention, a former Liberal MPP—has jumped 56% in the past two years. We've seen nurses fired, hospital beds closed, but for high-rolling Liberal porkers, it's an all-you-can-eat buffet. Premier, how do you justify this?

**Hon. Dalton McGuinty:** The leader of the official opposition weaves some wonderful magical tales which have nothing to do with reality. But I think it's important to understand what it is that the Conservatives really want to do. They just don't have the strength on certain days to say it. They think we should cut taxes by about \$3 billion and we should eliminate the Ontario health premium. They think we should deprive the Ontario government of \$5 billion in revenues. There's only one way to accomplish that, and that is to close hospitals, to fire nurses, to underfund our schools, to fire water and meat inspectors and to cut social assistance programs. That's what they're talking about. We're not going to do that.

We will find an additional \$1 billion in savings—last year we found \$800 million—and we'll do it in a way that does not compromise the public services that families have to count on.

## NURSES

**Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer:** My question is for the Premier. Despite your rhetoric, about two thirds of the people surveyed in a year-end poll indicated they'd seen no improvement in health care. Now we learn in the Toronto Star today that 72 registered nurses are going to be fired from the Rouge Valley Health System because they can't balance their budget. This is not an isolated incident. Other hospitals are also going to be laying off staff and cutting services and beds. Premier, how can you justify the firing of these nurses?

**Hon. Dalton McGuinty:** To the Minister of Health.

**Hon. George Smitherman:** While the question remains unanswered from the earlier answers provided by our Premier, which is, where is that party's specific plan in terms of how they intend to cut \$3 billion in health care—

*Interjections.*

**Hon. George Smitherman:** Obviously, asking them to come forward with a list of the \$3-billion cut to health care in detail would be helpful.

In the very specific case of the Rouge Valley Health System, I can confirm that this is a hospital that has been operating beyond its level of budget. The implication, according to Rik Ganderton, the CEO, is that there may be some disruption in employment. The key thing to make note of is that it is not necessarily real people who will leave the organization. The 72-number figure—



*Interjections.*

**Hon. George Smitherman:** I know this is hard for the honourable members but—

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Would the member for Renfrew please take his proper seat? Thank you. Member for Kitchener–Waterloo.

1440

**Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer:** Premier, you now have the longest serving health minister in the province of Ontario. Regrettably, under his watch, we now have 66% plus of the people in the province indicating in the Nanos poll that they had seen no improvement in health care. We now have a situation where this government has refused to keep their promise to hire 8,000 new nurses in their first term. In fact, you fired 757 in January 2005.

Yesterday, Premier, you said you were not going to fire nurses. Today we learn that you are. How can you justify firing nurses for a second time?

**Hon. George Smitherman:** The honourable member stands in her place and is not prepared to acknowledge her record and her reputation. When they were in office, nurses were referred to as hula hoops and thousands of nurses were fired. Our record, to the contrary, as evidenced by all the data from the College of Nurses of Ontario, is that there are thousands more nurses employed in Ontario today.

On the issue of support, look to the agreement ratified recently between the Ontario Nurses' Association and the Ontario Hospital Association: the highest percentage ratification for a contract in the history of negotiations between those two parties. In the member's very own community, as a result of our intervention at the Grand River Hospital, 20 additional doctors are on site and wait times have been reduced in emergency rooms—

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Thank you.

*Interjection.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Respect the Chair, please. Final supplementary.

**Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I am proud of our record. We hired 12,000 additional nurses.

*Interjections.*

**Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer:** We hired 12,000 more nurses. We introduced family health teams.

We have a minister today who has cut hospital beds. We have fewer beds today than we did when our government was in office. We have a minister—the facts are right here, Mr. Smitherman—who said on March 31 that Ontarians don't want to lay off nurses. Today he said to the media that it "may be a necessary evil" to balance hospital budgets.

I say to you, Mr. Smitherman, how can you justify the firing of nurses?

**Hon. George Smitherman:** In the particular instance of one hospital in Ontario, the Rouge Valley Health System, they have been operating beyond the level of their approved budget. Accordingly, consistent with the notion that we are all accountable and responsible to work within an approved volume, they are taking the

action necessary to align their budget, as all hospitals in the province are expected to.

On the issue of nursing, we are very proud to be the government that is further evolving the role of nurses, that we have a nurse-practitioner-led clinic in Sudbury and that over the course of the next several years, we will be bringing this extraordinary innovation where nurse practitioners can work together and enhance access to family health care right at the community level. Nurses are appreciated, for once, in the province—

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Thank you. New question.

## NURSES

**Mr. Howard Hampton:** A question to the Premier: Does the Premier agree with his health minister that laying off 72 nurses at Rouge Valley Health System is necessary?

**Hon. Dalton McGuinty:** I think we just heard, and will hear shortly again, from the Minister of Health on this score. I think that any objective assessment would help Ontarians come to the conclusion that we have hired thousands more nurses. We're proud of the fact that they're available and working in a number of different environments.

We're hiring thousands more and, as the Minister of Health just said, we're going to take this a step further. There's going to be a new evolution in the role nurses play in Ontario. We're going to have—what do we call them?—nurse-practitioner-led clinics. That's something that has been sought for a long time on the part of nurses. We think it's time to take that step forward. We have one already in Sault Ste. Marie. We look forward to putting a few dozen more around the province.

**Mr. Howard Hampton:** Premier, the College of Nurses of Ontario says that you failed to keep the promise that you made in 2003 to hire 8,000 new nurses. You fell more than 2,000 nurses short on that. The heart of the matter is this: Nurses are the very people in the health care system who make our hospitals work. If people are going to get quality care, we have to have nurses providing that care. Premier, why are you, who promised to hire more nurses, now in effect cutting patient care by firing nurses?

**Hon. Dalton McGuinty:** To the Minister of Health.

**Hon. George Smitherman:** It's important to note again that the 72 is a reference to positions, and this does not result in a named individual leaving a hospital corporation. This is the quote from Rik Ganderton.

I think it's important to restate the facts here: Rouge Valley Health System has seen an increase of nearly \$30 million in their base budget since our government came to office. This is a substantial investment. Every hospital in Ontario has received more money, each and every year. The honourable member can make no such claims for when he was in government, nor can this party oppose. We have a hospital, Rouge Valley, that has spent beyond their approved budget. They're taking the steps



necessary, which is fair not only to the local citizens but to all the citizens across the province of Ontario.

Some 17.55 million additional hours of nursing care is what's in our party's platform as we seek to further enhance the number of nurses working in Ontario, something that neither of these parties did when they were the government.

**Mr. Howard Hampton:** The Premier and the minister can repeat the promises all they wish. The fact of the matter is, 8,000 new nurses were not hired. The fact of the matter is, in an area where the population is growing, where patient load is growing, where health care needs are growing, the McGuinty government is now laying off nurses.

But it's not just there. A community-based bachelor of nursing program run out of Lakehead University in northwestern Ontario is also shutting down. Twenty-five annual graduates who are supposed to serve underserved communities have been told that their program is not going to operate.

I ask the Premier again, why are the McGuinty Liberals laying off nurses in the greater Toronto area and shutting down nursing programs in northwestern Ontario when you promised to hire more nurses, because, to quote the Premier, they're the heart of the hospital and health care system?

**Hon. George Smitherman:** On the issue of Lakehead, it's astonishing that a member from northwestern Ontario would be so ill-informed as to offer that information. He knows it was the absence of a post-secondary institution to support that program which has allowed it to continue. There has not been any alteration whatsoever in the resources available from our government, and the honourable member knows that very well.

He knows another thing very well. He knows that nurses are the heart and soul of health care, and he knows, through a variety of initiatives, that we've done more to enhance their standing and position than any government in a good, long time.

Some 17.55 million annual hours of care are what we will add to the extraordinary progress that we've made to date, including the implementation of the new graduate guarantee that saw 86% of program participants transitioned to full-time employment.

When they were in office, we trained nurses and then we squandered them; our government's putting them to use. And nurses in Ontario ratified, to the highest degree in their history, the recent contract between the Ontario Nurses' Association and the Ontario Hospital Association. How about—

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Thank you. New question.

#### DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

**Mr. Howard Hampton:** To the Premier: The Premier should note that in fact last year more nurses retired from the system than were added to the system.

But I want to ask the Premier this: Noelle Mowatt is a 19-year-old girl who is nine months pregnant, about to give birth. She has not been charged with committing a crime and has no criminal record. Why is she in jail?

**Hon. Dalton McGuinty:** To the Attorney General.

**Hon. Christopher Bentley:** Without getting too far into the circumstances of a case that is before the courts, let's just outline a few facts here. Domestic violence is a crime. It's a serious offence. This government takes the offence seriously, and this government takes the prosecution of all those offences very seriously.

1450

In circumstances in criminal offences where there is a key witness in the case, it is part of the law that the crown can apply for a material witness warrant. The police make every effort to obtain evidence through other means, but from time to time, cases need a particular witness in order to be fully and properly prosecuted. That application goes before the judge and the judge makes an independent decision, having regard to all the circumstances, including the seriousness of the allegations and the protection of the victims and parties involved.

**Mr. Howard Hampton:** The key part that the Attorney General tried to gloss over is that it's his agent, the crown attorney, who asked—who demanded, in this case—that a 19-year-old woman who's about to give birth, who has never been convicted of a criminal offence, who's not charged with a criminal offence, be put in jail, and she has now spent the last five nights in jail. She wants to know, what kind of a message does this send to women who are victims of abuse? What kind of message does it send when they're in fact the people who get put in jail? She says, "They're treating me like I'm a murderer ... I didn't kill anybody. I didn't do anything wrong."

Can I ask: Is putting Ms. Mowatt, the victim, in jail going to protect battered women across Ontario?

**Hon. Christopher Bentley:** Criminal law often presents some very difficult cases and very difficult circumstances. The former Attorney General would know not necessarily to sit in his chair and second-guess the independent decisions made by a judge and a justice of the peace without knowing the circumstances around the allegations, the seriousness of the offence, the safety of the parties involved and all of the circumstances. But if the former Attorney General is suggesting that we go back to where it was when I started practising, when cases were regularly dropped without being pursued through the courts, when a simple say-so resulted in the end of a charge, when a person's not coming to court for any number of reasons resulted in cases disappearing, that places women and children in this province at far greater risk than what he is actually suggesting today.

**Mr. Howard Hampton:** Not only has this young woman been put in jail, but after she spoke to the media and started raising questions about why she was in jail, she was then put in solitary confinement. This is what her lawyer says: "That's not a place you want to be. They



told her it was for her own protection, but I believe it was to punish her for talking with the media.”

Yesterday, it was a 58-year-old great-grandmother who was in jail. Today, it's a 19-year-old pregnant woman who's about to give birth, who has never been convicted of an offence, who's in jail. My question is, is this the McGuinty government justice policy? When you can't get what you want by some means, jail—jail for the victim.

**Hon. Christopher Bentley:** I think it's bordering on the outrageous that the former Attorney General plays politics with cases before the court. If he's asking me whether we'll go back to where it was when I started practising law, I say no. If he's asking me that the province should take the position of domestic violence cases that happened for a decade, the first decade I practised law, I say no—when cases were regularly thrown out if somebody phoned the police and said, “You know, I don't want to go ahead with it”; where cases were regularly thrown out when, on the first trial date, a material witness did not show up. That type of approach places victims, women, children at far greater risk.

We take domestic violence cases seriously. It is a crime. It will be prosecuted. The safety of women and children who are victims is the first priority always for this government.

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** This will be my final warning to the member for Nepean—Carleton.

#### CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY

**Mr. Tim Hudak:** A question to the Premier: It appears that the harmful impact of Dalton McGuinty's tax-and-spend policies has now moved from manufacturing into the construction sector. Statistics Canada reports that gains in the total value of building permits in 10 provinces and territories were totally offset by a substantial decline here in Ontario. Excluding Ontario's results, the total value of building permits nationally would have increased by 10%. Ontario's results: Permits fell by 16%, with a 44.9% plunge in the non-residential sector. Premier, is this not the latest indication that your tax-and-spend policies are creating a Dalton McGuinty recession in Ontario?

**Hon. Dalton McGuinty:** It's becoming easier now to categorize the questions as either “spend” questions or “cut” questions. A moment ago, the question from the former Minister of Health, now the health critic in the Conservative Party, was telling us that we needed to do more and to spend more money to retain nurses. Now we're hearing from her colleague, who sits just a few seats away from her, that it's important for us to take \$5 billion out of government revenues. So this is now a “cut” question. We're feeling kind of whipsawed—not from day to day, but within the confines of one single question period, from seat to seat. It's hard to understand where they're coming from.

We think we've got it right. We've got a plan that takes into account the need to invest in the skills and education of our workers, to invest in infrastructure, to cut taxes—and we are cutting taxes in a thoughtful, sustainable way—while at the same time, to invest in infrastructure and to support innovation. That's a thoughtful, responsible plan for the challenges created by high oil prices, a high dollar and a sluggish US economy.

**Mr. Tim Hudak:** Premier, you know who's being whipsawed: It's the 25,000 people who lost full-time jobs in Ontario just this past month. It's the 192,000 families that have lost well-paying manufacturing jobs thanks to your tax-and-spend policies—the people who know that Dalton McGuinty has taken Ontario from first in Confederation to dead last in job creation. That's who's whipsawed, Premier. Look further at that report. When it comes to the commercial sector, retail, office buildings, hotels—Ontario: dead last in Confederation. Institutional construction: dead last in Confederation. Industrial growth: dead last in Confederation.

To use your own words, Premier, isn't this one of those grab-you-by-the-ear moments and give them a little shake and say that something is amiss with your tax-and-spend policies here in Ontario?

**Hon. Dalton McGuinty:** It's back to their magic solution: It's all about taxes. If we can cut taxes to the tune of \$5 billion, then suddenly hundreds of thousands of new jobs would bloom on the Ontario landscape. I just don't see it that way. We see things differently. Taxes are an important issue, but we don't have a one-point plan as my colleagues opposite do; we've got a five-point plan. We are cutting taxes, but we're investing in the skills and education of our workers. We are partnering with the business sector. We are investing in infrastructure. We are supporting innovation. That's thoughtful, that's responsible, and I firmly believe that it will be effective.

#### INTERNATIONAL TRADE

**Ms. Cheri DiNovo:** My question is for the Premier. Premier, why did you try to keep Sandra Pupatello, the Minister of Economic Development and Trade—

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** I'd like to remind the member that we don't use names; we use ministry titles or their riding names.

**Ms. Cheri DiNovo:** My question again to the Premier is: Why did he try to keep his minister's trip to China a secret from Ontarians, from Ontarian Tibetans, from the press and from the opposition?

**Hon. Dalton McGuinty:** That's not true. Minister Pupatello publicly stated that she'd be going to China in two recent speeches: to the Toronto Board of Trade—and, to the best of my understanding, that speech was delivered in public—and also to the Oshawa Chamber of Commerce.

China represents the location for many of the exports generated by Ontario manufacturers. It's a very important trading partner with us. It's not surprising at all that the Minister of Economic Development and Trade would



spend some time focusing on that emerging giant and talking publicly about how important it is for us to nurture stronger trade ties.

1500

**Ms. Cheri DiNovo:** A question again to the Premier: The whole world is watching. Tibetans are being killed as we stand here and speak. There are relatives of those Tibetans. You're answering to them and you're answering to human rights activists around the world when you stand up and defend this trip.

So I ask you, and I ask you again: When the Minister of Economic Development and Trade goes—we don't want her to go, but if she goes—will she at least be speaking about Tibetan human rights? Will she be asking for an open border so that journalists can get to Tibet? Will she be asking for the Chinese government to sit down with His Holiness the Dalai Lama?

**Hon. Dalton McGuinty:** I am pleased to say that in the not-too-distant past I had the opportunity to sit down with the Dalai Lama. He requested that I meet with him, and I met with him.

**Ms. Cheri DiNovo:** No, you didn't.

**Hon. Dalton McGuinty:** I can also say—the member may not be familiar with this—that for close to 40 years now, if not more than that, the federal government has had a policy of what they call constructive engagement in place, so that, for example, in 1970 Canada became the first western nation to recognize the Peoples' Republic of China. We were met with criticism at that time. Since that time, we have worked actively, as a nation, through federal governments of a variety of political stripes, to continue this dialogue and policy of constructive engagement. So the minister will be travelling to China, and she will undoubtedly find opportunities to raise all kinds of issues on behalf of Ontarians that go beyond the purview of business.

#### MINIMUM WAGE

**Mrs. Laura Albanese:** My question is for the Minister of Labour. Last week, at midnight on March 31, 2008, the minimum wage was increased to \$8.75 an hour. This is the fifth time the McGuinty government has increased the minimum wage since taking office in 2003. When the Conservatives were in power, they froze the minimum wage the entire time they were in office. Our government takes a different approach to assisting the lowest-paid workers in Ontario, and that is widely welcomed.

Many residents in the riding of York South–Weston work in industries such as the retail sector, food production and the services sector, where the minimum wage is often the standard wage. Could the minister please clarify why our government is taking this gradual approach to increasing the minimum wage to over \$10 an hour by 2010?

**Hon. Brad Duguid:** I want to begin by thanking the member for York South–Weston, for not only her question, but her unceasing advocacy on behalf of low-

income workers across this province—not only since she's been in this place, but well before. This member has an incredible track record in that area, and I thank her for that.

The member is correct. After nine years of no increases to the minimum wage, this government has increased the minimum wage every year since we've been in office. The member is right. It has gone from \$8 to \$8.75 last week.

The key is we've done it in a balanced way, an aggressive but gradual way, to give businesses across this province the time to adjust, so that the very people we're trying to help are not put out of work by our actions. We're making a difference in the lives of low-income Ontarians through this policy and all the other policies we're doing to advocate and to try to address the problems of poverty.

**Mrs. Laura Albanese:** I am confident that the constituents of York South–Weston welcome the increases and are definitely relieved that our government is not freezing the minimum wage for a decade like the Conservative government did, even though we are preparing for an economic slowdown. Could the minister explain what the impact of these increases is in relation to other provinces across Canada?

**Hon. Brad Duguid:** One of the things that makes us, on this side of the House, very proud of our minimum wage policy is when we took office under the Tories, the minimum wage was down at the very bottom of the country. Right now, as of today, it's at the very top in Canada. We've brought the minimum wage right up to the top. But more than that, other provinces across the country are buying into our approach. They're following our approach of a gradual but aggressive increase to the minimum wage.

Ironically, even the NDP government in Manitoba agrees with us and not with their NDP cousins here in Ontario. They've rejected their policy. They're following our approach, because they know that they want to make sure they don't give low-income workers a wage increase one day and a pink slip the next. That's exactly what would happen if we were to take a reckless policy such as that advocated by the NDP.

#### INTERNATIONAL TRADE

**Mr. Robert W. Runciman:** My question is for the Premier. He has indicated that he's tired of spend-and-cut questions, so I have a question about ethics. Again, it has to do with the trip that the Minister of Economic Development and Trade is taking to China.

I think the Premier knows that many Ontarians are justifiably distressed over Chinese oppression in Tibet. You also know—you said to Ontarians yourself to steel themselves for an economic slowdown and possibly a recession—that we have a crisis in manufacturing; 25,000 jobs lost just last month.

Premier, none of these approvals for overseas trips go through without your office signing off on them. Given



the tenor of the times, given what's going on in China now and what's going on in this great province, why would you approve such a trip?

**Hon. Dalton McGuinty:** Given the state of the economy, it has become all the more important that we reach out beyond our traditional trading partner, the United States of America, and look to other parts of the world. In fact, I would like to think we're building on precedents and a foundation established by governments of all political stripes.

I've got a document here, called the Ontario Business Report, published by the government in April 2001. It's very excited at the time about how the government of the day was establishing new international marketing centres to promote Ontario businesses. In fact, they were going to Shanghai to establish a business centre there. I think it's really important for my Minister of Economic Development and Trade to build on that tradition, in keeping with those precedents, to establish yet another international marketing centre, this time in Beijing.

**Mr. Robert W. Runciman:** The difference, of course, is that we were creating hundreds of thousands of new private sector jobs. The Premier is suggesting to us today that it's important to have a member of his cabinet who is responsible for the manufacturing sector in this province go to China to cut a ribbon. Essentially that's what this is all about. You know it and I know it. She is going to cut a ribbon. She's also potentially undermining Canada's position on human rights issues.

*Interjection.*

**Mr. Robert W. Runciman:** Well, I think she is, by sending out the wrong kind of message. I have to say, Premier, that this tends to confirm suspicions about your complacency about what's happening to people and communities in this province—the loss of almost 200,000 manufacturing jobs since July 2004. Once again, I ask, how in the world could you sign off on a trip like this, given the sad state of our manufacturing sector, our economy and now the housing sector, and given the oppression currently occurring in Tibet?

**Hon. Dalton McGuinty:** A couple of things: We take our cue from the federal government. If the federal government wants to move beyond the traditional approach of constructive engagement, we will obviously take that into consideration.

But I want to quote from something the honourable Bob Runciman, then-Minister of Economic Development and Trade, said in the context of travel to Shanghai to open up a new international marketing centre: "As Ontario companies sell more to foreign markets, they make our province more competitive and our future more secure. That's why we continue to aggressively build on our global strategy.... These marketing centres will not only promote Ontario businesses but also they will build awareness of Ontario as a premier destination for investment." He was right then, and he's wrong today.

## EXECUTIVE COMPENSATION

**Ms. Andrea Horwath:** My question is to the Premier. Will the Premier explain why his political fixer and Liberal hack, Jim Warren, received a 91% pay increase working at the lottery corporation, why Mr. Warren's salary ballooned from \$189,921.73 to \$362,371.80 in a single year? Is that level of pay appropriate when the McGuinty government holds minimum wage and vulnerable workers to the poverty line?

1510

**Hon. Dalton McGuinty:** To the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal.

**Hon. David Caplan:** Members opposite would know I've had opportunities, certainly, in the past year to answer plenty of questions related to the Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corp.

I would say to the member that the amounts in relation to Mr. Warren relate to severance, and Mr. Warren is no longer there. The member well knows this, by the way. It was well publicized at the time. It just reflects, in the annual salary disclosure, the amount of severance, because we do want to be open and transparent with all Ontarians about all of the costs that are incurred.

I'm very happy to present this information. The member already knows it, and it's a matter of public record.

**Ms. Andrea Horwath:** Just so everybody understands, Jim Warren was the Premier's crony who was sent to the OLGC specifically to minimize the fallout over the McGuinty government's lottery scandals. He was there a very short time, granted, but the government saw fit to give him \$173,000 on his way out the door.

Was Mr. Warren's 91% pay increase the Premier's way of rewarding a political friend for taking the lottery scandal heat for his government? And will the Premier explain why taxpayers are on the hook for this disgusting example of McGuinty pork-barrelling?

**Hon. David Caplan:** In fact, the member presents statements which are not true. Mr. Warren left the Premier's office many years before. He was recruited by then-CEO Mr. Duncan Brown. His salary and his severance reflect the contract that he signed with Mr. Brown to provide the service there.

I can assure this member and all members of this Legislature that no member of this government had, in any way, shape, or form, anything to do with the contract negotiation, the salary or the severance for Mr. Warren. I hope that settles the matter for the member.

## INVASIVE SPECIES

**Mr. David Orazietti:** My question is for the Minister of Natural Resources.

First, let me say that our budget has been fantastic news for the city of Sault Ste. Marie, as we're committing \$15 million toward the construction of a new invasive species research centre in my riding. This is an important initiative, as our government recognizes that invasive species are one of the greatest contributors to



species extinction and loss of biodiversity. Factors such as increased global trade and climate change are having profound effects on species distribution outside of their normal biological range. Invasive species are exacting a toll not only on our environment, but on our economy as well.

Minister, can you tell us how this new invasive species research centre will help protect Ontario's natural resources and improve our economy?

**Hon. Donna H. Cansfield:** I'd like to say thank you to the member from Sault Ste. Marie, who worked with the Canadian Forest Service, Fisheries and Oceans Canada, the Canadian Food Inspection Agency and the city of Sault Ste. Marie, along with Ministry of Natural Resources staff, on the concept for this institute.

Without question, the issue of invasive species is a very serious one for this province. Although the federal government has the lead on invasive species, all too often they take up residence in Ontario, so it makes a great deal of sense for us to work together.

Sault Ste. Marie has the type of personnel already established to continue the good work that they've been doing. The most important thing here is that we're working together in a collaborative way to address the very serious issue of invasive species in this province. Unfortunately, we've had too many in the past, and I believe that there are more to come in the future, and it is only by working together that we can make a difference. So setting up the research agency in the Soo makes imminent sense, given the personnel who are already there.

**Mr. David Oraziatti:** That's another great reason that the opposition should be supporting the budget.

The new invasive species research centre affirms Sault Ste. Marie's position as a national leader in forestry research. My community already contains the largest concentration of forest researchers in the country, with CFS, the Canadian Forest Service, and OFRI, the Ontario Forest Research Institute, as well as related divisions of the Ministry of Natural Resources.

Minister, it was recently mentioned in the Legislature that the emerald ash borer is an invasive species that is responsible for destroying a significant number of ash trees throughout southwestern Ontario and the northern part of the United States. As part of our government's strategy to partner with innovative companies to bring ideas to the marketplace, we supported BioForest Technologies of Sault Ste. Marie with a \$50,000 grant in 2006 to help find an effective way of combatting the emerald ash borer. The company partnered with your ministry and others to protect the environment and improve the economy.

Minister, can you elaborate on the work that's being done and conducted in partnership with your ministry to combat invasive species?

**Hon. Donna H. Cansfield:** This is truly another good example of how we can work together. Earlier this year, the ministry requested that the federal government approve a natural insecticide called TreeAzin for use against the emerald ash borer. As we've heard—and the

member from Norfolk indicated—this is a serious issue throughout the province. By monitoring over the last five years with field tests, we've supported this particular emergency application. We have received notice from Health Canada that we can in fact use this agent and it's been approved for use this year, in 2008.

TreeAzin was actually developed by Dr. Blair Helson at the Canadian Forest Service's Great Lakes Forestry Centre in Sault Ste. Marie and is licensed to BioForest Technologies of Sault Ste. Marie. This is a particularly important new type of initiative because it's actually an injection into the tree and in fact will get to the fungicide that's left by the borer, and hopefully we can find a new way to address a very significant issue in this province.

## HUMAN RIGHTS

**Ms. Lisa MacLeod:** The Premier once said, "The best indicator of future behaviour is past behaviour," so my question is for the Premier. Of course he also said earlier today that human rights are just a federal concern. I would then like to ask him why this government would appoint Raj Anand, the former Chief Human Rights Commissioner of Ontario, who resigned under a shroud of controversy of unorthodox hiring practices and alleged racial discrimination, to head the new Human Rights Legal Support Centre.

**Hon. Dalton McGuinty:** To the Attorney General.

**Hon. Christopher Bentley:** Once again the Tories engage in the old proverb, "A smear a day keeps the qualified away."

Raj Anand is highly qualified to be the chair of the legal support centre. Twenty years ago, allegations were made and he was cleared completely, but the member brings them up. Since that time, and before that time, he has an unblemished record in defending and promoting human rights in the province of Ontario and throughout the world. He has been recognized throughout the world for his work and he is the appropriate person to lead this very important centre as part of our transformation.

What I'd like to know is, what part of Mr. Anand's qualifications do the Tories not think justifies his appointment? Stand up and tell us.

**Ms. Lisa MacLeod:** I'll happily respond because I'm not afraid of the member opposite's rhetoric. The minister should have checked the facts. They should learn that if they don't want to be doomed to repeat history, then they should listen to the answers from before. Let's look at the facts as they played out in the last 20 years.

In 1989, it was a government review, headed by a deputy minister, that criticized Anand's management at the commission for failing to maintain records. These were the headlines of the day: Toronto Star, "Rights Commission Hiring was Flawed"; Ottawa Citizen, "Province to Investigate Rights Commission"; Globe and Mail, "Rights Agency Assailed for 'Job Rigging.'"

We've had several concerns from the public over this appointment, to top it off, back in the day. Will they suspend Mr. Anand's appointment until after an indepen-



dent, arm's-length commission once and for all clears the air on this 19-year-old controversy of Mr. Anand's management—

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Thank you. Minister?

**Hon. Christopher Bentley:** She doesn't like the answer we got 20 years ago when there was a review that completely and utterly exonerated the gentleman whose name she is impugning today.

What is it about his qualifications, since he was cleared of the allegations that she wouldn't dare make outside the House? What is it about the qualifications that she doesn't like? Is it that he served as the Advocates' Society representative on the equity advisory group? Is it that he served on government-appointed boards before the human rights tribunal in the federal court challenges? Is it that he has been part of legal clinics that have served to promote and advocate for human rights? Is it that he was the winner of the Advocates' Society's highest award, the law society's highest award, or that he was the Indo-Canadian professional of the year? What part of his reputation do you want to smear tomorrow?

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Stop the clock.

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** New question.

1520

#### HOME CARE

**M<sup>me</sup> France G  linas:** Ma question est pour le ministre de la Sant   et des Soins de longue dur  e. Hier dans cette Assembl  e, le ministre nous a dit : He has had between six to eight meetings in his office to talk about home care. Minister, this reasonably select number of people is not the same as a public consultation. Ontarians want their voices heard. Will the minister agree to hold an open public consultation on the new home care model?

**Hon. George Smitherman:** Those six or eight meetings that I had included organizations that are representative of a really broad array of players and interested individuals at the community level.

I never pretended that I was in a position to be able to take every meeting that people might wish, but I did say to the honourable member, and I repeat to the honourable member and all today, that on this matter I'm very open to hearing from individuals through the formal means of communication, and I would encourage people who have views to let their members know, or to let me know by means of direct correspondence.

I can assure people that as I consider the options that are available in preparation for offering advice to my government, I'm really keen to hear from individuals and would encourage them to send letters or e-mails, or indeed be in touch with members of this House.

**M<sup>me</sup> France G  linas:** Yesterday, the minister also said that he has an obligation. His obligation is to maximize the opportunity to be aware of information that

comes from a variety of groups, and he has repeated that this afternoon.

Rather than following his own advice, the meetings are behind closed doors. Ontarians are only asking to be heard. The suggestion that you've made this afternoon to go to your MPP, to send faxes or e-mails could be a suggestion, but why won't you hold a public consultation on home care?

**Hon. George Smitherman:** The honourable member asked the same question. I could offer the same answer.

At the heart of it, our foundation with respect to home care is to enhance it. More than 80,000 additional people are receiving home care services than when we first came to office. We anticipate that home care will continue to emerge as part of our health care system as a solution to some of the institutional care, and accordingly, I think that's an interesting subject to many in this House.

That's why I think it's very appropriate that members who have views on this, or are hearing views expressed by their constituents, please let me know. I will be very attentive to those concerns that are raised, as we move forward in making some alteration to the delivery of the competitive bidding processes in the province of Ontario.

#### PROCEEDS OF CRIME

**Ms. Sophia Aggelonitis:** My question is for the Attorney General. The Attorney General recently announced a civil forfeiture of a substantial amount of property in Stoney Creek and Ancaster that was found to have been used in connection with a marijuana grow operation, or found to be proceeds of that unlawful activity.

My question is whether the Attorney General can tell this House how the Civil Remedies Act is being used to protect Ontario's communities by removing the profit from unlawful activities and supporting victims.

**Hon. Christopher Bentley:** I want to thank the member from Hamilton Mountain for her advocacy in ensuring that we take the profit out of crime, and she's absolutely right. That's exactly what the Civil Remedies Act does.

The Tories may not support the principle of taking profit out of crime, but we believe it's appropriate to do that, and in the community of Hamilton, we've done just that. In fact, we have taken over \$5 million out of the pockets of criminals, and we've done that in two specific instances.

In Stoney Creek, there was a property used to produce and traffic in marijuana and to steal electricity. There was also a property in Ancaster, where cash and bank accounts were found to be the proceeds of unlawful activity.

As a result of a Superior Court order, \$325,000 was forfeited to the crown. That's the profit out of crime. There's been a total of \$5 million seized under this act. It's a clear message: If you engage in criminal activity, we're going to take the profit out of crime through the Civil Remedies Act.



**Ms. Sophia Aggelonitis:** All of those who work so hard to enforce our laws in this way deserve our thanks for their efforts. I would like especially to thank Chief Brian Mullan and the Hamilton Police Service.

I'm certain that Ontarians strongly support the message that unlawful activities such as grow operations are not welcome in their neighbourhoods. Can the Attorney General tell this House how Ontario's civil forfeiture law is being used to compensate victims of the underlying unlawful activities?

**Hon. Christopher Bentley:** The member is absolutely right to be thanking Chief Mullan and the Hamilton Police Service for their very great work in this particular area. They're doing a great service to the people of the community and the province of Ontario.

She is also right in that the other part of this is that the grants that are taken out of the pockets of those who engage in illegal activity are used to support victims and organizations that support victims. In fact, since 2003, over \$1 million in grants have been distributed to the victims of crime and to organizations that support the victims of crime.

This is a win-win, not only for the people of Hamilton but the people of Ontario. You take the profit out of crime; you use the profits to support the very people who are aggrieved by the crime in the first place.

Thanks again to the member from Hamilton Mountain for her great work in advocacy in this regard.

## TOBACCO INDUSTRY

**Mr. Toby Barrett:** To the Minister of Agriculture: Last week you attended a meeting in Ottawa with your federal counterpart, a meeting that resulted in no federal dollars for farmers desperate to get out of tobacco.

Minister, you were at the table. What went wrong with these negotiations? Can you inform this House, inform farmers, residents of Brant, Oxford, Norfolk and Elgin, what Ontario's position was at that meeting at the table? Farmers do have a right to know what happened.

**Hon. Leona Dombrowsky:** I couldn't agree more that farmers certainly do have the right to know. That is why I made it very clear that I wanted the farmers to be represented at the meeting, and in fact they were. I would offer that within the tobacco farming community, their representatives were there. I'm sure that they would report to their community.

The honourable member has asked what went wrong. This was a meeting that was called by the federal government. I believe that the federal government has raised expectations within the tobacco community around what might have come out of that meeting. I don't know why the federal minister didn't say more than he did. I think that was the question that the tobacco farmers came away with as well.

**Mr. Bill Murdoch:** What's Ontario's position?

**Hon. Leona Dombrowsky:** The member from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound says, "What's Ontario's position?" What it has been for years—

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** It's going to have to wait until after the supplementary.

**Mr. Toby Barrett:** We do request Ontario's position. Quebec has paid out their farmers.

You've called for a special tax to help farmers out of this meltdown of the tobacco market. Your Ontario government has raised cigarette taxes a number of times since coming to office. Your government obviously likes imposing new taxes and special taxes. You do like the idea of the feds imposing a tax to help out tobacco growers. That's like you buying a car with someone else's money, Minister, but you publicly do favour a buyout.

Will you now go forward with the use of Ontario cigarette taxes to help the four counties and their farmers to get out of this mess?

**Hon. Leona Dombrowsky:** I think that it's very important, first of all, to ask the member not to attribute any motive to me. I've been very clear on behalf of this government in terms of what I believe the tobacco farmers need.

Number one, I want to say that our government has provided \$50 million to tobacco farmers since coming to office. Thirty-five million of those dollars went directly into the farmers' pockets; \$15 million went to the community to help them transition to another industry.

The position of Ontario has been, is now and will continue to be that we believe, with respect to an exit strategy, it would be the users of the tobacco product and not the taxpayers of Ontario who should fund such a strategy. This does put the ball in the federal court. I think it does certainly place the expectation that any strategy would be led nationally. We support the tobacco growers in their request for that. That was certainly, in my view, made very clear at the meeting—

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Thank you, Minister. New question.

1530

## WATER QUALITY

**Mr. Peter Tabuns:** My question is to the Premier. Yesterday, the Canadian Medical Association Journal reported that since 2006, Ontario had had 679 boil-water advisories. Implementing the sustainable sewage and water act was a key recommendation of the Walkerton inquiry. The act was passed in 2002. You still haven't proclaimed it. When are you going to proclaim it?

**Hon. Dalton McGuinty:** To the Minister of the Environment.

**Hon. John Gerretsen:** Yes, we saw those numbers that were given out yesterday as well. Let me first of all say, we take the—

**Ms. Andrea Horwath:** Very seriously.

**Hon. John Gerretsen:** We take it very seriously. That's right; you're correct. We take the testing of our water very seriously, and I can tell you that it's out of a sense of precaution that all these steps are taking place.

The numbers that were actually tested last year are, relatively speaking, no higher than any other year, but as



a result of all the recommendations that were put into place from the Walkerton inquiry, basically we've got the statistics now to a much higher degree than we ever had before.

We take it seriously. We want to make sure that it's a precautionary approach. Sometimes these situations only last for a few days; sometimes longer than that. There's no question that in the long run a lot of the water systems will have to be improved. Through the grant programs that have been ongoing through this government over the last five years, we're doing that on a consistent basis.

**Mr. Peter Tabuns:** In 2002 that act was adopted. You still haven't proclaimed it. I don't see that as any sign of serious gravity, any taking of this in the way it has to be taken. When will you proclaim the act?

**Hon. John Gerretsen:** That will happen in due course.

## PETITIONS

### LORD'S PRAYER

**Mr. John O'Toole:** I'm pleased to present a petition on behalf of a number of my constituents from the Orono United Church, Port Perry/Prince Albert Pastoral Charge and many other congregations in the riding of Durham. There are hundreds coming in daily. The petition reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the current Liberal government is proposing to eliminate the Lord's Prayer from its place at the beginning of daily proceedings in the Ontario Legislature; and

"Whereas the recitation of the Lord's Prayer has opened the Legislature every day since the 19th century; and

"Whereas the Lord's Prayer's message of forgiveness and the avoidance of evil is universal to the human condition: It is a valuable guide and lesson for a chamber that is too often an arena of conflict; and

"Whereas recognizing the diversity of the people of Ontario should be an inclusive process, not one which excludes traditions such as the Lord's Prayer;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, ask the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to preserve the daily recitation of the Lord's Prayer by the Speaker in the Legislature."

I'm pleased to present this, sign it and support it and present it to Adam, one of the new pages.

### HOME CARE

**M<sup>me</sup> France Gélinas:** I have a petition from SEIU and the people of Kitchener-Waterloo.

"Whereas the Ontario government has continued the practice of competitive bidding for home care services; and

"Whereas the competitive bidding process has increased the privatization of Ontario's health care delivery, in direct violation of the Commitment to the Future of Medicare Act, 2004; and

"Whereas competitive bidding for home care services has decreased both the continuity and quality of care available to home care clients; and

"Whereas home care workers do not enjoy the same employment rights, such as successor rights, as all other Ontario workers have, which deprives them of termination rights, seniority rights and the right to move with their work when their employer agency loses a contract;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"We call on the government of Ontario:

"(1) to immediately stop the competitive bidding for home care services so home care clients can receive the continuity and quality of care they deserve; and

"(2) to extend successor rights under the Labour Relations Act to home care workers to ensure the home care sector is able to retain a workforce that is responsive to clients' needs."

I fully support this petition, affix my name to it, and will be giving it to page Bethany.

### PUBLIC WASHROOMS

**Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti:** I have a petition here signed by members of the Fir Valley community and headed up by Mr. Sonny Sansone.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Toronto and greater Toronto area has the highest rate of Crohn's and ulcerative colitis in Canada;

"Whereas this disease requires patients' fast access to public washrooms;

"Whereas there is a lack of public washrooms on the current TTC subway system and lack of access for these patients;

"Whereas the Ontario building code only requires the TTC to build public washrooms at the end-of-line stations;

"Whereas the York subway line is about to be built with provincial dollars;

"We, the undersigned, therefore request the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing to amend the Ontario building code to provide public washrooms at every station on the York subway line."

I agree with this petition, affix my signature to it and give it to page Michael, who is here with me today.

### GREEN SPACE

**Mr. Ernie Hardeman:** I have a petition here signed by a great number of my constituents in Oxford county.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Burgess Park is an undeveloped, provincially owned area of natural forest and meadows,

adjacent to the Thames River in Woodstock, which is managed by the city of Woodstock through an agreement with the Upper Thames River Conservation Authority; and

"Whereas Burgess Park is one of the last remaining significant natural areas within the historical city boundaries, within walking distance of downtown and most residents, and with a connection to the other green and open spaces in the city; and

"Whereas this land is now threatened by the city's decision to allow a land lease for a golf course expansion on the property; and

"Whereas since 1946, the mandate of conservation authorities in Ontario has been defined in section 20 of the provincial Conservation Authorities Act as 'to establish and undertake, in the area in which it has jurisdiction, a program designed to further conservation, restoration, development and management of natural resources ...'

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

"Please protect the integrity of the few significant green spaces left in the city of Woodstock so that we can maintain a natural corridor through our city. Please ensure that the Upper Thames River Conservation Authority adheres to their legislated mandate. Do not allow these parks and conservation lands to be commercially developed. We need to protect first, restore second and keep what exists. Once it is gone it will never come back."

Thank you very much for this opportunity.

#### DISABLED PERSONS PARKING PERMIT PROGRAM

**Mr. Michael A. Brown:** "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas there currently exist problems of exposure to theft and the weather when displaying a disabled person parking permit on a motorcycle while parked in a disabled parking space;

"We, the undersigned, petition our members of Parliament to promote the development of a special, fixed permit as proposed by the Bikers Rights Organization, for use by disabled persons who ride or are passengers on motorcycles, even if that requires an amendment to the Highway Traffic Act."

I want to thank the Bikers Rights Organization and Michael Warren for furnishing these petitions to me. I affix my signature.

#### LORD'S PRAYER

**Mr. Toby Barrett:** This petition is titled "Don't Remove the Lord's Prayer."

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the current McGuinty government is proposing to eliminate the Lord's Prayer from its place at the beginning of daily proceedings in the Legislature; and

"Whereas the recitation of the Lord's Prayer has been an integral part of parliamentary tradition since it was first established in 1793 under Lieutenant Governor John Graves Simcoe; and

"Whereas the Lord's Prayer's message is one of forgiveness, of providing for those in need of their 'daily bread' and of preserving us from the evils that we may fall into; it is a valuable guide and lesson for a chamber that is too often an arena of conflict; and

"Whereas recognizing the diversity of the people of Ontario should be an inclusive process, not one which excludes traditions such as the Lord's Prayer;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, ask the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to preserve the daily recitation of the Lord's Prayer by the Speaker in the Legislature."

I affix my signature to these petitions.

#### ANTI-SMOKING LEGISLATION

**Mr. Reza Moridi:** I have a petition in support of Bill 11, "Children and Smoke-Free Cars"

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas children exposed to second-hand smoke are at a higher risk for respiratory illnesses including asthma, bronchitis and pneumonia, as well as sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS) and increased incidences of cancer and heart disease in adulthood; and

"Whereas the Ontario Medical Association supports a ban on smoking in vehicles when children are present, as they have concluded that levels of second-hand smoke can be 23 times more concentrated in a vehicle than in a house because circulation is restricted within a small space; and

"Whereas the Ipsos Reid poll conducted on behalf of the Ontario Tobacco-Free Network indicates that eight in 10 (80%) of Ontarians support 'legislation that would ban smoking in cars and other private vehicles where a child or adolescent under 16 years of age is present'; and

"Whereas Nova Scotia, California, Puerto Rico, and South Australia recently joined several jurisdictions of the United States of America in banning smoking in vehicles carrying children;

"We, the undersigned, respectfully petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to approve Bill 11 and amend the Smoke-Free Ontario Act to ban smoking in vehicles carrying children 16 years of age and under."

I sign this petition and support it.

1540

#### LORD'S PRAYER

**Mr. Bill Murdoch:** I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, sent to me by Faith Seibold from Owen Sound, Ontario.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the current Liberal government is proposing to eliminate the Lord's Prayer from daily proceedings in the Ontario Legislature; and



"Whereas the recitation of the Lord's Prayer has opened the Legislature every day since the 19th century; and

"Whereas the Lord's Prayer's message of forgiveness and the avoidance of evil is universal to the human condition: It is a valuable guide and lesson for a chamber that is too often an arena of conflict; and

"Whereas recognizing the diversity of the people of Ontario should be an inclusive process, not one which excludes traditions such as the Lord's Prayer;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, ask the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to preserve the daily recitation of the Lord's Prayer by the Speaker in the Legislature."

I have signed this, and I'm going to give it to Jordynne.

### HIGHWAY 17

**Mr. Jean-Marc Lalonde:** I have a petition from constituents of Rockland, Cumberland, Vankleek Hill and Hawkesbury.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the past government of Ontario transferred the responsibility for Highway 17 to the municipalities, the city of Ottawa and the united counties of Prescott and Russell; ...

"Whereas in 2001, the administration of the united counties of Prescott and Russell estimated the circulation of 21,000 vehicles per day during the week as you enter the city limits of Clarence-Rockland on 17, and has since reached 25,000; ...

"Whereas the MTO regional staff had recommended and accepted, as presented by the management review board on April 27, 1992, that Highway 17 east of Ottawa be retained as a provincial collector highway following completion of Highway 417; ...

"Whereas the eastern Ontario population demands the same road security services;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Ontario Ministry of Transportation hereby take back the responsibility of Highway 17/174 or give provincial funding for its widening from the city of Clarence-Rockland to the city of Ottawa."

I have also signed this petition.

### LORD'S PRAYER

**Mr. Bill Murdoch:** I have a petition that was sent to me by Dave McIntyre, from RR1, Priceville, in my riding. These petitions come from all over the riding. The last one was from Owen Sound; this one is from Priceville.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the current Liberal government is proposing to eliminate the Lord's Prayer from daily proceedings in the Ontario Legislature"—I know there are other people who would like to get one on, so I'll just read the last part of it:

"Therefore we, the undersigned, ask the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to preserve the daily recitation of the Lord's Prayer by the Speaker in the Legislature."

I have also signed it.

### HOSPITAL FUNDING

**Mr. Lou Rinaldi:** I have a petition here from the western Mississauga ambulatory surgery centre that I'm happy to read and present to the House. It reads as follows:

"Whereas wait times for access to surgical procedures in the western GTA area served by the Mississauga Halton LHIN are growing despite the vigorous capital project activity at the hospitals within the Mississauga Halton LHIN boundaries; and

"Whereas 'day surgery' procedures could be performed in an off-site facility, thus greatly increasing the ability of surgeons to perform more procedures, alleviating wait times for patients, and freeing up operating theatre space in hospitals for more complex procedures that may require post-operative intensive care unit support and a longer length of stay in hospital;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care allocate funds in its 2008-09 capital budget to begin planning and construction of an ambulatory surgery centre located in western Mississauga to serve the Mississauga-Halton area and enable greater access to 'day surgery' procedures that comprise about four fifths of all surgical procedures performed."

I'll sign it and have Bethany deliver it to the table.

### LORD'S PRAYER

**Mr. John O'Toole:** I'm pleased to present a petition on behalf of my constituents in the riding of Durham—and I'm actually receiving a number of these every single day. Out of respect, I'll present it. It reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the current Liberal government is proposing to eliminate the Lord's Prayer from its place at the beginning of daily proceedings in the Ontario Legislature; and

"Whereas the recitation of the Lord's Prayer has opened the Legislature every day since the 19th century; and

"Whereas the Lord's Prayer's message of forgiveness and the avoidance of evil is universal to the human condition: It is a valuable guide and lesson for a chamber that is too often an arena of conflict; and

"Whereas recognizing the diversity of the people of Ontario should be an inclusive process, not one which excludes traditions such as the Lord's Prayer;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, ask the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to preserve the daily recitation of the Lord's Prayer by the Speaker in the Legislature."

I'm pleased to sign this and present it to Michael on behalf of my constituents.

### HOSPITAL FUNDING

**Mr. Bob Delaney:** I have a petition to the Ontario Legislative Assembly. It was sent to me by a number of residents of Mississauga, Brampton and Burlington. It reads as follows:

"Whereas wait times for access to surgical procedures in the western GTA area served by the Mississauga Halton LHIN are growing despite the vigorous capital project activity at the hospitals within the Mississauga Halton LHIN boundaries; and

"Whereas 'day surgery' procedures could be performed in an off-site facility, thus greatly increasing the ability of surgeons to perform more procedures, alleviating wait times for patients, and freeing up operating theatre space in hospitals for more complex procedures that may require post-operative intensive care unit support and a longer length of stay in hospital;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care allocate funds in its 2008-09 capital budget to begin planning and construction of an ambulatory surgery centre located in western Mississauga to serve the Mississauga-Halton area and enable greater access to 'day surgery' procedures that comprise about four fifths of all surgical procedures performed."

I'm pleased to affix my signature to support the petition and to ask page Marco to carry it for me.

### NOTICE OF DISSATISFACTION

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott):** Before I call for the orders of the day, I have to inform the House that pursuant to standing order 37(a), the member for Parkdale-High Park has given notice of her dissatisfaction with the answer to her question given by the Premier concerning the planned trip to China of the Minister of Economic Development and Trade. This matter will be debated today, I understand, at 6 p.m.

### ORDERS OF THE DAY

#### BUDGET MEASURES AND INTERIM APPROPRIATION ACT, 2008

#### LOI DE 2008 SUR LES MESURES BUDGÉTAIRES ET L'AFFECTATION ANTICIPÉE DE CRÉDITS

Resuming the debate adjourned on April 7, 2008, on the motion for second reading of Bill 44, An Act respecting Budget measures, interim appropriations and

other matters / Projet de loi 44, Loi concernant les mesures budgétaires, l'affectation anticipée de crédits et d'autres questions.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott):** Further debate?

**Mr. Lou Rinaldi:** It gives me great pleasure to speak about our budget that's before the House that was presented by our finance minister a week or so ago. I tell you, the comments I hear from folks around the province, but particularly in the riding of Northumberland-Quinte West where I have eight municipalities and one county level of government, it's very encouraging and really reinforces what this government is all about: working together with the community, investing in infrastructure both within the municipality and the public sector, but also working with industry and the education sector.

I guess I can spend the next 10 minutes or so that I'm allotted to speak about my thoughts on the budget, as I indicated a minute ago, but rather than do that, I'm just going to take some time to quote some of the newspaper reporting, quotes from some mayors and some leaders in the community and indeed some of the editorials from some of the many newspapers that cover my riding.

1550

Let me begin. For example, part of the MIII—and these are in no particular order, but it's all related to the budget. The municipality of Brighton, which is where I hail from, as part of Northumberland county, received the \$1 million they applied for, for a much-needed expansion of their arena, adding washrooms and a recreational complex. They applied for \$1 million towards a \$2-million-or-so expansion, and it was awarded. Here's the quote from Mayor Chris Herrington, a good mayor from the municipality of Brighton: "We're thrilled with the province's \$1-million investment in this project and look forward to moving ahead with this expansion." The message I got from the municipality is that if they weren't successful, the project would probably be held up, because certainly, these municipalities have other priorities. I can tell you, back in my days as mayor of that great municipality, going back some five years, that project was on the table then. That just could not be done because there were other priorities.

My good friend the mayor of Trent Hills, Hector Macmillan—I wish I could show you a picture of him and his CAO on the day they found out that they got \$1.4 million to spend on roads and bridges. I'll just quote from the paper: "Trent Hills mayor Hector Macmillan and CAO Mike Rutter just couldn't get that smile off their faces this week," after they heard the announcement. I tell you, in a municipality with some 13,000, 14,000 people, very rural—it's got over 500 kilometres of roads and a number of bridges—that \$1.4 million goes a long way.

Another quote from Brighton's *The Independent*: "Savers and home-owning seniors were among the winners"—of this budget—"while the county's bid for blanket broadband coverage was also boosted by a commitment to spend \$30 million over the next four years by



providing high speed Internet access to rural southern Ontario." This is a good investment.

I had two post-budget breakfasts that the chambers hosted, one in the eastern part of the riding, in the great city of Quinte West, with the Quinte West Chamber of Commerce, and the other the day after, in Port Hope, a joint breakfast with the Northumberland Central Chamber of Commerce and the Port Hope and District Chamber of Commerce. The mayor of Brighton is also the warden of the county, and it reads: "Northumberland county gets \$2,004,780, and County Warden Christine Herrington described the money as 'much needed,'" to deal with their budgetary pressures.

Another quote from Mayor Macmillan of the city of Trent Hills, whom I just spoke about a few minutes ago: "Mr. Macmillan noted that the construction program, both in the county and across the province, will provide an economic boost as well as improving the transportation routes in Northumberland." So it's a win-win.

I'm particularly proud that two days after the budget, as I mentioned before, I was a guest speaker, talking to business leaders, municipal leaders and chamber members from the Northumberland Central Chamber of Commerce and the Port Hope and District Chamber of Commerce when they held a joint breakfast in Port Hope. I'll just read this quote from the paper. I think I mentioned this once before in this House. It reads: "From farmers to Northumberland county politicians, it was a bit of a lovefest at Thursday's joint Northumberland central and Port Hope and district chambers of commerce post-provincial budget breakfast as people thanked Northumberland–Quinte West MPP Lou Rinaldi for a variety of provincial budget windfalls affecting rural and small-town Ontario."

I'll carry on with the same article. A well-respected farmer in our community of Port Hope, Northumberland Federation of Agriculture representative John Boughen, one of the biggest farmers in my riding, attended the breakfast. Here's what it says: "He welcomed the \$56-million for the Pick Ontario Freshness Strategy and the same amount of funding for animal husbandry research at the University of Guelph and for the Ontario Veterinary College, as well as expanding the land transfer tax exemption to include transfers from family farm corporations to individual family members."

He went on, and I won't read his whole quote, just another paragraph: "He thanked the province for its previous risk management monies and criticized the federal government for not coming through with its 60% share on the program."

A business person at the same meeting, Dave Strong from Ward 2, which is a mostly rural part of Port Hope: "He was encouraged the budget included \$30 million over four years to bring faster Internet service to this part of Ontario."

I'll carry on with these quotes. The day after the budget there was an editorial in the Cobourg Daily Star. The headline sort of encapsulates the editorial: "Something for Farmers, Seniors, Students, Unemployed." That

really tells about the riding of Northumberland–Quinte West and the majority of Ontario.

Let me read another quote from that editorial: "Federal Finance Minister Jim Flaherty can" yell "all he wants about cutting corporate taxes. There is no evidence that a few percentage points of difference have driven industry wholesale from Ontario to some other jurisdiction. Other major market factors, over which the provincial Liberals are not masters, have done that."

These are not my words. These are words that are coming from my community.

Another quote from Warden Chris Herrington about MIII—the county was able to get roughly \$800,000 to rebuild part of former Highway 2, which was down-loaded by the previous government and now it's a county road. "The dollars announced today to allow us to rehabilitate this stretch of County Road 2 are very much appreciated." There was no pork-barrelling, like the opposition will tell you. It's a real shame that they take that attitude.

My good friend Mayor Mark Lovshin from the township of Hamilton said, "It's nice to put some money back into the community." The arena project, which they got the MIII funding for, surely enhances that community in the beautiful municipality of Hamilton township.

"Port Hope Chief Administrative Officer Carl Cannon said the municipality is also pleased to see a four-year, \$80-million Eastern Ontario development fund included in the recent budget." It was part of this budget, and I'll tell you, the folks in eastern Ontario are going to be delighted. They had a similar program some seven, eight or maybe 10 years ago, and it was taken away. It was something, but whatever it was, it got taken away, and what the federal government came forward with for eastern Ontario is only half of what the province is doing. So I'm delighted to mention that, because it's very, very important for eastern Ontario.

Let me tell you what the Trenton Trentonian, in the municipality of Quinte West, said: "Municipalities, including Quinte West, had been demanding more money in Tuesday's provincial budget for broken bridges, roads, water and sewer mains."

The mayor and city officials said the province delivered.

1600

I carry on. Councillor Jim Harrison is also the past chair of the Ontario Good Roads Association. "He said the provincial budget addressed a lot of the association's concerns." So this goes beyond the riding of Northumberland–Quinte West.

"I'm quite pleased they committed another \$400 million for rural Ontario," Councillor Harrison said.

Mayor Williams of Quinte West "said the one-time funding of \$1.7 million in the provincial budget and the funding application of \$400,000 gives the city more leverage in capital works being completed in 2008.

"It's great news for the city and we can move forward with other projects," said Williams."



Most municipalities—Mr. Speaker, as you know, some of us had the pleasure of serving on those councils. The needs were there greatly, and what I can tell you is, this was really, really appreciated.

I think my time has come to a close, but I just want to give a small quote.

“But the strong point of the budget, says Quinte ... economic development manager Chris King,” is not just about a tax cut; it's about job training. These folks in the trenches know how important that is.

Chris goes on: “We weren't expecting big corporate tax relief,” said King. “But there is more support for local manufacturers. Tax relief is only part of the bigger picture.”

So, as you can see from municipal leaders to business leaders in my community—I believe this was a great budget. I certainly hope that we can get it passed so that we can implement all those budget measures that were there.

I could go on for hours, but I'm going to end it there.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott):** Questions and comments?

**Mr. Norman W. Sterling:** I'm pleased to add some comments to the speech from the member from Quinte West. He started out by talking about and highlighting some of the municipal spending in the budget. Certainly, any municipality is happy to receive money, but part of the problem with the money being handed out, especially through the MIII fund, is that it is a competitive process.

Municipalities are happy to receive money in the riding of Parry Sound–Muskoka. We have some 26 municipalities. There were five that were successful and 21 unsuccessful. For each of the applications in this competitive process, they have to hire engineers; there's expense involved. Gravenhurst has applied four times to various programs for some very-much-needed roadwork and has been unsuccessful every time. So I think what municipalities would like to see is reliable, plannable funding, like a share of the gas tax, which is what the federal government sends to municipalities. Then they can plan; they know how much revenue they have coming in.

This budget that we've just had introduced recently is a typical Liberal tax-and-spend budget. It's \$96.7 billion, and what have we got? We've got more debt in the province of Ontario. The Ontario debt is now up to \$167.7 billion. That means that we're paying a million dollars an hour, or \$9 billion a year, on interest to service the debt which has been added to by this government. Spending is up 48% in Ontario since this Liberal government has come to power—48%. When you read the papers and see that building permits in the last month are down 16%, and the jobless rate—we lost 24,000 jobs, I believe, in the last month. I call this budget anything but prudent when we have economic storm clouds on the horizon.

**Mr. Michael Prue:** I rise to comment on the speech made by my friend from Northumberland–Quinte West. I listened intently as he quoted from a number of news-

paper articles and a number of mayors lauding what was done. Of course, anyone is going to say that this was a good budget if they got something out of it. Of course the municipality that got \$1 million to build a bridge is going to say, “Thank you for the \$1 million for letting us build the bridge.” Of course the municipality that got some money to repair a road is going to say, “Thank you very much for the money to repair the road.” These are all very polite people, and I expect nothing more or less from them but to say thank you when a gift is given to them like that.

I also went to the Good Roads conference along with my friend; I saw him there. I saw the mayors and reeves and the assorted other people falling all over themselves trying to find some money for their municipality. One should not expect any less from a municipal government. One should not expect any less from a councillor or a mayor or a reeve but to try to get some more money to staunch the decay that is in so many Ontario towns.

But what my friend did not talk about is all the people who have been left out of the budget. He didn't read out thank-you letters from those people on ODSP, who are going to get a lousy 2%, and then only in the last quarter of the year. He didn't read out thank-you letters from people who have been completely ignored in this budget, municipalities that have been ignored. He didn't read out thank-you letters from all of the people who I think were disappointed that there wasn't even a single word about daycare, about child care in the budget. No money spent on new homes in the budget: You didn't get any letters from people thanking you for that.

So I take it all with a grain of salt. You've made some people happy, and they thanked you as polite people will do, but you've made many, many more angry, of which you do not want to talk.

**Mr. Jim Brownell:** I'm pleased to have a few minutes this afternoon to add to this debate. I certainly want to commend and thank the member from Northumberland–Quinte West for his advocacy for the people in his riding, especially with the eastern Ontario economic development fund. I want to say thank you for your leadership there and for your encouragement to all of us who represent those rural ridings of eastern Ontario. It's certainly going to be a great help.

The member spoke with passion about the communities in his riding, and he's speaking from experience. He knows what it has been like to serve on municipal councils, and the wants and the wishes of those municipalities over the years. I, too, served for 14 years on municipal councils. I know that they had long lists of projects that if they just had that wee bit of help, they could move some of those projects along. We made that happen. I'm delighted that we had \$400 million in the budget to allocate to getting that out into the province and rolling it out.

I too hosted a post-budget breakfast on the Friday. I received comments from municipal leaders with regard to that allocation and also with the MIII allocations that were received. People like Charles Barkley, mayor of



South Dundas, couldn't have been more happy, because he was at the post-budget—we had post-budget hearings in the riding. The minister was down, and Charles Barkley made comments about that, that here was a government that was listening, and he hoped that the minister was there to listen for the other things that he was looking for. Certainly municipal infrastructure was on his lips, and the same with Bryan McGillis, the mayor of South Stormont. He too was at that meeting. They all had these lists, and I'm glad that we had a government that listened with \$400 million.

**Mr. Robert Bailey:** I would like to comment on the member from Northumberland—Quinte West's comments on the budget and the act.

I was at the Ontario Good Roads Association too, and I heard a number of comments from municipal leaders. At one of the meetings I sat in on, in expressing their remarks to myself and a number of other members who were holding information sessions, a comment was made that they felt like a number of salivating dogs waiting for a bone or a morsel to be thrown to them every year when they came cap in hand to the provincial government, to the different ministries, looking for handouts.

I didn't think that was a very good way that our municipal leaders have to feel when they come down there, to echo comments made by other members, who are just glad to get these dollars to complete projects that are well deserving and have been on the drawing boards for a long time. But when he said that he felt like a salivating dog, I felt that it was an awful comment that a municipal leader elected by his fellow peers and members of the community had to go cap in hand and feel in that respect.

On this side of the House, we feel that the government is on the wrong track. We're on the road to 200,000 manufacturing jobs lost; hardships in many communities with layoffs just announced in the House today; firing nurses in different hospitals in the Toronto area—Brampton area, I guess it was. I think we need to get the tax rates right.

One of the things we called on was to accelerate plans announced in the fall economic statement and eliminate the capital tax for all businesses immediately, to reduce the regulatory requirements on all businesses, and to give hard-working Ontarians and seniors a tax break. I think that will go a long way to improving this economy and getting Ontario back on the right track.

1610

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott):** That concludes the time for questions and comments. I'll return to the member for Northumberland—Quinte West, who has two minutes to reply.

**Mr. Lou Rinaldi:** I want to thank my colleagues the members for Parry Sound—Muskoka, Beaches—East York, Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry and for Sarnia—Lambton.

I am not surprised by some of the comments from the members of the opposition. I guess it's to be expected, but I think some of them have a very, very short memory because I, like my friend from Stormont—Dundas—South

Glengarry, was in municipal government when both of those parties had the opportunity to serve as a government for the province of Ontario. I need to remind them that they also handed things down. But as municipal leaders of that day, we weren't so grateful.

We got handed down highways.

**Mr. Jim Brownell:** Highway 2.

**Mr. Lou Rinaldi:** Highway 2. Highway 28. Highway 30. What a short memory. They did hand things down. But as mayor of the municipality of Brighton, I wasn't very appreciative. I wasn't thanking them. When my friend from Beaches—East York says that, yes, there was only one time—they also handed things down. As reeve of Brighton township in that day, our staff had to lose days in order to accommodate their social contract. They weren't saying thank you. I guess my friend from Sarnia—Lambton—I know he's new to this place, but I know he has a lot of experience. They keep on saying we're on the wrong track. Well, the only track they know is to cut taxes.

All he's got to check is the records from the two terms of government served previously to this government. What did they do when they cut taxes? We find Ontario in the mess that we are in today, from which we are trying to recuperate. So they did hand things down, but I certainly wasn't thanking them that day like the municipal leaders are thanking this government today.

I appreciate their comments. I would expect nothing different from them, but I think the people of Ontario have spoken loud and clear. Hopefully, we can get through this debate process and get this budget passed so that we can all have the benefit from it.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott):** Thank you very much. Further debate?

**Mr. Tim Hudak:** I am pleased to comment on Bill 44, a.k.a. the budget bill. I remind the table that this is the lead, on behalf of the official opposition, for my speech. We had deferred the lead on Monday night, so the clock should indicate 60 minutes, as opposed to 20. I thank the table for that.

My friend from Northumberland—I always enjoy his remarks. When I refer to the member, I know I'm not supposed to use his name; I can call him Sweet Lou once in a while, so I call him the sweet member from Northumberland. A nice enough fellow, but as we heard from his comments, hopelessly misguided in many senses in terms of appraising an Ontario budget that does nothing to stop the decline in the economic indicators, really, across the board.

I'll talk a bit about that in my comments, particularly, I guess, in the set-up to the situation that the finance minister and the Premier would have found themselves in as they prepared the 2008-09 budget not too long ago.

If my colleague from Northumberland is so excited about Highway 2 and other highways he mentioned, I would assume that he would have uploaded them to the provincial government by now. After all, the McGuinty government has increased spending precipitously, \$20-some-billion more in spending. So if these were real



priorities, I assume that would have taken place. I'll look through the budget closely, but I didn't see any news about Highway 2 in this recent budget.

I did see some members opposite get their backs up a little bit with the Northumberland member's harsh comments about the former Liberal Premier of the province, Bob Rae. Of course, Bob Rae, one of the leaders in the federal Liberal Party—he's recently taken a seat there—had a lot of backing from members opposite in his recent leadership bid. I know that they're sensitive to some of the criticisms of Bob Rae and his policies. Maybe the Northumberland representative has not read the briefing book on that yet, but he certainly wouldn't want somebody like the health minister to be mad at him for his harsh criticisms of Bob Rae's time in office as the last Liberal Premier.

Before I get into specific comments on Bill 44 itself, let me talk a little bit about the state of the economy, the situation that Finance Minister Duncan and Premier McGuinty found themselves in as they were preparing the 2008-09 budget. I'll refer you to a story from CanWest News Service, Tuesday, March 25, 2008, about the state of the economy. The headline: "Ontario Heading for Recession this Year: Desjardins." The article says: "Ontario will be pushed into a recession this year by a slump in the US economy, a Canadian financial institution warned Tuesday in advance of the release of that province's annual budget."

Yves St-Maurice, the deputy chief economist at Desjardins Group, said this in their release on the latest global and domestic forecast: "[Ontario] is more dependent on international exports than Quebec is, and will not be able to avoid a drop in production in the first two quarters of 2008." In summary, he said, "Technically, therefore, Ontario will be in a recession in the early part of the year."

We also saw that TD had come out with a report—maybe I'll get to that in a little bit—forecasting that Ontario's growth would be a paltry 0.5%: barely moving forward; in crawling. I remind you that in the Desjardins report, in the TD report or in the Royal Bank of Canada's recent report, it's eye-opening how far Ontario has dropped from its historic position as a leader of economic growth and job creation in Confederation.

The Royal Bank of Canada just this past month put out their own economic analysis. They go through province by province. When you look at the variance in how the provinces are described vis-à-vis Ontario, you would think that would have given the finance minister or the Premier pause and caused them to re-evaluate their five years of runaway spending and high taxes that have brought Ontario to the "brink of recession," according to RBC's report; that's the term they use.

Let me give you some examples. Saskatchewan's headline is "The New Provincial Growth Leader." That will come as no surprise to the mayor of Windsor, Eddie Francis, who has recently been in discussions with western provinces like Saskatchewan on flying Windsor workers from Windsor to the western provinces and then

trying to get them back with their families to spend time. You can't blame the mayor for trying to assist his residents, as best as possible, to keep them in the community—Windsor now with, sadly, one of the highest unemployment rates in all of Canada, let alone the province of Ontario.

**Mr. Robert Bailey:** They call it Air Duncan.

**Mr. Tim Hudak:** My friend from Sarnia—Lambton says accurately that they call it Air Duncan in southwestern Ontario. It's appropriate because it's the finance minister's policies, approved by Premier McGuinty, that have driven almost 200,000 well-paying manufacturing jobs from our province. It's ironic that the community from which the finance minister and the Minister of Economic Development and Trade both hail, Windsor, has suggested flying people from their community to the west coast to find work. So my colleague from Sarnia—Lambton is right in coining that Air Duncan.

Where was I? Saskatchewan, the new provincial growth leader—RBC says, "We expect Saskatchewan to be Canada's top growth performer this year, coming in at 3.6% in 2008 and 3.2% in 2009.... Saskatchewan now ranks number one across all key housing indicators that we track."

You may recall that it was the previous—believe it or not—NDP government in the province of Saskatchewan that reduced tax rates. Saskatchewan had been the province that had the highest rate of taxation on business investment in Canada. In fact, I believe Saskatchewan was the jurisdiction in North America that had the highest rate of taxation on business investment. It was the New Democratic government in the province of Saskatchewan that lowered that tax burden to try to attract new business investment—existing businesses to expand, new businesses to move to Saskatchewan.

Currently, the Saskatchewan Party is in office, Premier Wall continuing those policies and making sure that Saskatchewan is attractive to business investment. Now you can see the success. It's predicted by RBC to be number one in growth in Canada, in large part due to much more sensible fiscal policies. On Manitoba, RBC says, "A new hot spot? Manitoba likely reported another solid year of growth and is expected to continue to outperform the national average."

1620

It's interesting that when the Premier is keen to offer all kinds of excuses as to the state of the province of Ontario, he likes to point the finger of blame at George Bush and the States. He likes to point the finger of blame at the government in Seoul, South Korea. He likes to point the finger of blame on a regular basis at Ottawa.

**Mr. Robert Bailey:** He doesn't own a mirror.

**Mr. Tim Hudak:** In fact, Dalton McGuinty has pointed to so many factors for the decline in Ontario's economy that he's run out of fingers and now has to start using his toes.

The one thing he has failed to do is to point a finger solidly at his own chest and examine his tax-and-spend policies that have brought Ontario from number one in



growth to the back of the pack in Confederation. My friend for Sarnia–Lambton notes that Dalton McGuinty must not have a mirror, since he does not seem to recognize that his own policies, beginning with the largest tax increase in the history of Ontario, have had an impact on our job creation.

Saskatchewan and Manitoba are doing very well, while British Columbia and Alberta are moving ahead. You get to Ontario in the RBC report and the headline—unlike Manitoba, “A new hotspot?,” and unlike Saskatchewan, “The new provincial growth leader”—says, “Ontario—On the brink of recession.”

Royal Bank of Canada’s economic report April 2008: “Ontario—On the brink of recession.”

Let me read a bit further into RBC’s report. “Further evidence of a slowdown is showing up in the province’s labour markets. Digging beneath the headline numbers, Ontario’s job market resilience now appears overstated. The year-long trend shows that the public sector has been doing the heavy lifting, while the private sector is in contraction, with declines in key sectors including forestry, agriculture, manufacturing, finance, insurance and real estate.” It’s kind of across the board. That’s hitting on large parts of our economy: “forestry, agriculture, manufacturing, finance, insurance and real estate.”

We certainly know that the manufacturing sector has had a major contraction. I think Dalton McGuinty at one point in time described it as “a minor contraction” to try to tamp down some media speculation. The reality is a major contraction in our manufacturing sector. My colleague from Halton, our economic development and trade critic, Ted Chudleigh, keeps a running total of manufacturing job losses and keeps us updated. Hopefully, the Premier is seeing some of these reports because he seems rather oblivious to it. But Mr. Chudleigh will report that 192,000 well-paying manufacturing jobs have left our province under the last couple of years of the McGuinty government, so we knew the manufacturing sector was in trouble.

RBC raises some very alarming concerns about the private sector in a broad-based sense: “contraction,” with declines in “forestry, agriculture, manufacturing, finance, insurance and real estate.” You may recall as well the question I asked earlier today. One of the strengths in the province of Ontario that was spurred on by the reforms of the Mike Harris-PC government has been the housing sector: reforms on the labour side, reforms on the land development side, reforms on reducing the tax burden and energizing our province.

By the way, to remind folks again, it helped to create over one million net new jobs in the province of Ontario, at a time when Ontario was number one in job creation in North America. The construction sector was one of the booms and maintained that boom for some time. But the same sort of slowdown we’ve seen in manufacturing, the same sort of slowdown that RBC points out in their April report, has been picked up by Stats Canada in their

release detailing building permits for February 2008. I think it just came out yesterday.

The Globe and Mail covered it on page B5, the business section, where they said, in a headline, “Inactivity in Ontario Fuels Another Drop in Building Permits.”

Statistics Canada notes, rather interestingly, that if Ontario were excluded, the total value of building permits nationally would have increased 9.8%. So basically a 10% increase in the value of building permits across Canada, excluding Ontario.

When you throw in the dramatic decline in the province of Ontario, Canada’s numbers as a whole go down 1%. So you go from a 10% gain, you throw in Ontario’s lacklustre economy—thanks to Dalton McGuinty’s tax-and-spend policies—and you end up with a one-point drop across Canada.

“Permits in Ontario fell 16% to \$2 billion, with a 44.9% plunge in the non-residential sector inflicting the damage.

“This is pretty ugly for Ontario,” said Don Drummond, chief economist at Toronto Dominion Bank.” He went on to say in the article: “The manufacturing is easy enough to understand, but you have the fall-off in shopping centres ... it does suggest that this could be the start of a trend.”

Let me explain Mr. Drummond’s comments on the shopping centres a bit more.

Statistic Canada’s report, on page 3, goes into greater detail about Ontario’s building permit plunge. I know my colleagues opposite will have time for rebuttal, and if they can explain a different viewpoint on Statistic Canada’s latest report, I look forward to that. I certainly hope there is better news in the provincial economy, but Statistic Canada’s report, when it comes to building permits, paints a rather unfortunate picture.

Non-residential building permits are divided into three categories: institutional, commercial and industrial. Across Canada, “the institutional component plunged 35.7% ... the lowest level since April 2007,” again from the report. “The decline was spread across various types of buildings (schools, medical buildings, administrative buildings, nursing homes).” Well, certainly no nursing homes in the province of Ontario. I don’t know if the Liberals have actually built any new nursing homes despite growing waiting lists—certainly a record that has been harshly criticized by those who work in the long-term-care sector. “Overall, seven provinces posted declines, with the largest in Ontario, Alberta and Quebec.

“In the commercial component,” which Mr. Drummond references in the Globe and Mail article, “the value of permits fell 16.2% to \$1.2 billion, largely the result of a significant decline in projects for office buildings and hotels. It was the second-lowest level over the last 12 months.” Notably, Statistics Canada reports that, “Again, Ontario recorded by far the largest share of this decrease....

“On the industrial side”—sadly, no surprise—“the value of permits plunged 39.4% ... the lowest level since March 2006.... Significant declines in projects for manu-



facturing buildings in Ontario and utility buildings in Alberta were behind these results. In Ontario, the value of industrial permits hit its lowest level since April 2005.”

Generally, even if the economy were crawling along at 0.05%, as the TD suggests it is, you'd expect at least the value of permits to continue and increase; maybe not at the rates they experienced under the previous PC government, but you'd think they would increase. But in fact, no, we're seeing that in Ontario the value of industrial permits is in decline, going back down to levels experienced three years ago, April 2005.

On the housing side, the residential side, the report indicates that “the number of residential units approved has been on a downward trend since ... the summer 2007.”

Holy smokes. We know the manufacturing sector is in trouble in Dalton McGuinty's Ontario. His policies of increasing taxes to the highest level in all of North America have had an impact. Certainly, Dalton McGuinty's policies of restraining our energy supply and creating an enormous energy bureaucracy have caused our energy rates to increase.

There is also concern about future energy products coming on-stream and closing the gap that's going to exist ahead of us, which I think also motivates business decisions against the province of Ontario.

As was reported at our finance committee—my colleagues who were on that committee will probably recall—Ontario now has the second-highest energy rates among competing states and provinces. Energy had always been one of our strengths. Coming from Niagara, I can tell you that, with the great natural resource of Niagara Falls and Beck generating projects, fuelled by the Welland River, which goes through my community of Wellandport. We've always known in Ontario that we had a major strength in energy supply: competitive prices which helped to fuel our manufacturing boom through most of the last century. Dalton McGuinty's policies of restricting our energy supply, throwing up all kinds of red tape and causing a gigantic increase—in fact, I may even say gargantuan—in energy bureaucracy have given great pause to investments in the manufacturing sector and helped to fuel the decline.

1630

We also know that nobody can roll out the red tape like Premier McGuinty. He did make some promises in that regard but, like so many of his promises made in 2003, they went out the window as soon as he received the keys to the Premier's limousine. I don't have them in hand—I should bring them back up in the House sometime—but the ratio of regulations removed, compared to the regulations that have been added on to the back of entrepreneurs, businesses, and municipalities, is absolutely astounding. I think the cabinet ministers must spend three quarters of their time approving new regulations, when you see the piles of red tape that have now spooled out of the cabinet office.

These factors and more are contributing to the manufacturing decline. We knew that was taking place. We've seen—my friend from Halton will show you—192,000 manufacturing jobs, well-paying manufacturing jobs, now gone from the province of Ontario. Construction had always been a strength, bursting on the flames of the growth through the mid- to late 1990s, early 2000s.

Now, according to Statistics Canada, some alarming things are happening in the housing sector. You would expect that the same information RBC would have, that TD would have, the Stats Canada information, would come to the finance minister's office, would come to the office of the Minister of Economic Development and Trade and would come, presumably, to the Premier's office directly or through those two sources. So you would expect that some flags would have been raised about the state of the economy. The possibility, the growing possibility, I say to my friend from Pickering—Ajax, of a Dalton McGuinty recession—

*Interjection.*

**Mr. Tim Hudak:** —sorry, Pickering—Scarborough East, thank you; new riding boundaries, and this is Ajax—Pickering. Pickering has strong representation in the Legislature this evening. But they would both know, Ajax—Pickering and Pickering—Scarborough East, that we have a strong and growing possibility of a Dalton McGuinty recession here in Ontario. So you would have expected a change in the approach of the McGuinty government in their fifth budget. You would have expected this document, the Ontario Budget 2008, to diverge from what we've seen in the first four years of Dalton McGuinty, which has been moving the province from a competitive jurisdiction to one that has the highest rate of business taxation in all of Canada.

We have seen a spending increase in program spending precipitously, and as you heard in question period today, we're not sure with what results, aside from growing the size of the bureaucracy and increasing the number of government workers making more than \$100,000 per year, significantly. But otherwise it is hard to point out those results. So you would expect that we would have seen some restraint on the rapid expansion of government, some better understanding of the state of our economy and some effort to lower the tax burden on businesses, working families and seniors; some effort to lower the red tape burden faced by businesses that has throttled entrepreneurship and innovation in Ontario; some effort to increase our energy supply to make Ontario attractive again for manufacturing. But, sadly, in these 166 pages of the 2008 budget it's very difficult to find initiatives that will address any of those goals.

I'll move on from the RBC report. I think you get the picture. Desjardins, RBC, TD, Statistics Canada are all painting a picture of a province that is facing significant economic challenges: a growing potential of a Dalton McGuinty recession here in Ontario and no initiatives in the budget to change that. In fact, we see a continuation of the tried-and-true Dalton McGuinty path of runaway spending and higher taxes.



I've had the pleasure of sitting on the finance committee for some time as the critic. We have a couple of outstanding members, and I'll make sure the new riding names are correct: Wellington-Halton Hills—you may have heard of him, Mr. Speaker—a hardworking member, and despite his obvious-looking young age, a veteran of the Ontario Legislature; also, the member from Haldimand-Norfolk. They're our two members on the finance committee and they've done an outstanding job. It's a pleasure to serve with them as the finance critic.

Members like Wellington-Halton Hills and Haldimand-Norfolk, among others, have been calling for some time on the McGuinty government to re-examine the recklessness of their tax-and-spend ways and the impact it would have on our provincial economy. We see now the accumulation of the past five years, where the misguided economic policies have eroded Ontario's once highly competitive position.

To make sure you know that it's not just me who says this, the C.D. Howe Institute, the Fraser Institute, CFIB and the chamber of commerce will point this out. This one is from the C.D. Howe Institute: "Ontario has the least competitive business tax structure in all of Canada." When you combine a relatively high provincial corporate income tax rate, the capital tax, the sales tax on capital goods and the inputs in the process, Ontario has the highest tax rate on new business investment of all 10 provinces.

As I mentioned, high energy prices are another significant competitive disadvantage. They're central to significant job losses in both the manufacturing and forestry sectors. Let's put this in perspective again. The growth that we experienced in 2007—and if I recall correctly, Ontario was last or second from last in growth in job creation in 2007 under the McGuinty government—is the slowest rate of growth we've seen in the province of Ontario since the 1991 recession. Bob Rae was Premier. The projections of the banks are indicating that 2008 will have an even slower rate of growth. As I said, TD had half a per cent. Four of the five major banks rank Ontario ninth out of 10 provinces in terms of economic growth for 2008. We're the only province that has experienced a decline in manufacturing sales since 2003. So you would expect some admission of this. You would expect some action in the Ontario budget to try to reverse that decline.

Let me put it in perspective this way. We've always known an Ontario that has led Canada, that has been the engine of growth for the entire country, a place where folks would come from British Columbia, Newfoundland and Manitoba to work, to raise a family, to buy a home; a source of well-paying jobs, a strong economy, a place you could have a lot of confidence. Ontario under Dalton McGuinty is, believe it or not, sliding into have-not status. I know it's shocking. Right? It's shocking. We've always known that Ontario was one of the leaders that would share some of its wealth with the other provinces to try to bring them up. Saskatchewan used to be a have-not province, now it's a "have" province and leading

Canada in growth. Ontario under the McGuinty government is in jeopardy of becoming a have-not province. I hope I hear one of the government members in the debate over Bill 44 at least admit that and raise some concern. Instead, we hear this sort of Bobby McFerrin bad version of "Don't Worry, Be Happy": "Steel yourselves, don't panic"—whatever the latest line of the day is that comes from Premier McGuinty.

"Don't panic": By the way, isn't that one of the things from the Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy? I think that was a famous line. First thing: "Don't Panic." When it comes to the state of Ontario's economy in decline, in jeopardy of having have-not status, Dalton McGuinty uses that same line: "Don't panic." Hopefully, later in debate we will hear one of the government members address Ontario's jeopardy at becoming a have-not province, express some concern and give some answers on how that's going to be reversed.

Let me give you some of the information upon which I am basing that statement. Ontario's per capita fiscal capacity has fallen from roughly \$400 above the equalization standard four years ago. The federal government sets a bar as the equalization standard and provinces that are above contribute to the equalization program; provinces that are below receive money from the "have" provinces. Ontario has always been above that bar since the birth of the equalization program. I'm quite sure Ontario's always above that bar.

1640

Four years ago, around the time that Dalton McGuinty became Premier of this province, Ontario was \$400 above that equalization standard in the taxes kit—the highest taxes now in North America on business investment, higher energy prices, the runaway government spending, the increased red tape, the gargantuan growth in the number of government workers making over \$100,000 a year. Lots of vice-presidents and spin doctors hired; not many front-line workers on that list.

So you see that slow decline of Ontario under Dalton McGuinty. We were \$400 above that standard. Guess where we are today, Mr. Speaker: \$84 above that equalization standard, from \$400 just four years ago. If that trend continues, Ontario's in jeopardy, in two or three years' time, of falling below that banner and becoming a have-not province.

**Mr. Robert Bailey:** We'd be on the receiving end.

**Mr. Tim Hudak:** As my colleague from Sarnia-Lambton says, we'd be on the receiving end. I really hope that's not Dalton McGuinty's plan. I know he loves to blame the federal government for everything under the sun, but I really cannot believe that it is actually his plan to become an equalization province and then receive transfers from other provinces to fuel his runaway spending.

You'd think he'd raise taxes to as high as he's going to put them—right?—highest in North America on business etc. We didn't know that the tire tax and others were coming in. We didn't expect that because he said he



wouldn't do it. Fool me once, shame on you; all that kind of stuff. But he did.

The reality would be, if you're an equalization province, you'd receive funding from the other provinces and then Dalton McGuinty may go on another mad-money spending spree like we've seen in each of his budgets, including the 2008 budget.

I don't believe that's his motive. I don't believe that's his intent. I do believe that he shares the same concerns I do. I've not heard him talk about them in a serious way. But it is alarming to contemplate that Ontario has moved from \$400 above the equalization standard to a mere \$84 today.

To back up that statistic: In 2006, for the first time ever, Ontario's nominal GDP per capita fell below the Canadian average. If you take Ontario's gross domestic product, divide it by the number of people in the province of Ontario—GDP per capita, a measure of wealth of a province. For the first time ever, in 2006, Ontario's GDP per capita fell below the Canadian average. It's not the Ontario that you've always known, Mr. Speaker, not the Ontario my colleagues here have always known and not the Ontario that I grew up in—an Ontario below average in all of Canada in Dalton McGuinty's premiership. Four years ago, we were \$2,000 per capita above that national average. In 2006—Ontario is now below that average. That's a significant drop in a short period of time, from \$2,000 above to falling below that average.

It's matters like that that motivated the PC members of the finance committee to produce a dissenting report. We did bring forward several motions at the committee, the vast majority sadly voted down by the Liberal members of the committee. I know my colleague from Beaches—East York supported a number of those. We don't agree on all of those issues. There are some he didn't support, but we do appreciate his honest review of the motions, and he selected several to vote in favour of. The Liberal members of the committee, unfortunately, did not have that same fairness and voted down almost all of our motions, motivating the members of the committee, like Mr. Arnott from Wellington—Halton Hills, Mr. Barrett from Haldimand—Norfolk and myself from Niagara West—Glanbrook as the finance critic, to produce our report—which I recommend to members, if they haven't read it already—entitled *Once the Economic Engine of Canada, Now the Caboose: Are Dalton McGuinty's Harmful Economic Policies Driving Ontario to Have-Not Status?*

I mentioned a number of the findings of the committee, but let me give you a few more things that we heard about while travelling across the province. Under the title "McGuinty's Ontario Is Falling Below Economic Potential," it reads: "Under the McGuinty government, Ontario has become one of the slowest-growing provinces in Canada and has reported growth below the national average since 2005." That is, believe it or not, the longest string of underperformance in three decades in Ontario—below the national average since 2005.

"Slow growth: Ontario's growth in 2007 was the slowest in the country. All five major banks rank Ontario ninth out of 10 provinces for economic growth in 2008.

"Unemployment up: For the first time in 30 years, Ontario's unemployment rate exceeded the national average. All five major banks predict Ontario's unemployment rate will continue to rise across both 2008 and 2009." This was surprising. If you listen to the government members boast, the government members boast about job creation. In reality, as I've indicated, it's one of the poorest performances in job creation, not only in Canada's but in Ontario's history. Under Dalton McGuinty, there are more people on welfare. "The number of single employable beneficiaries of welfare is currently 102,748, up 10,180 or 11% since September 2003."

I know that my colleague from Beaches—East York, the finance critic for the New Democratic Party, dedicated a significant amount of his response to Bill 44, talking about the lack of the so-called poverty agenda and how it had fallen short in a number of respects. I think it's a very fair assessment. Dalton McGuinty had indicated that one of the priorities of his government in his second term was the poverty agenda. But you'd have to search very, very thoroughly to try to find any mention—I don't even know if they talked about their poverty reduction strategy in the budget. My friend from Beaches—East York—I won't repeat all of his words—indicated a number of areas where they've fallen short. Of course, as a Progressive Conservative I believe the best approach to fighting poverty is the creation of well-paying jobs, helping people move up the economic ladder, provide for their families, to contribute back. But we have seen the number of single employables on welfare increase by 11% under Dalton McGuinty's government. As my colleague from Beaches—East York points out, the rate of assistance that they're receiving is actually lower on a purchasing power level than it has ever been.

"Consumer confidence down: Housing starts have declined consistently since 2003 and are projected to plummet in 2008 to 62,000 annually, down from a peak of over 91,000 annually in 2003." This is alarming too. "Talented workers are leaving in record numbers. Ontario reported a net loss of over 36,000 people to other provinces in 2007, with a record loss of 14,720 people in the third quarter alone, the biggest out-migration in Ontario's history." Let me be clear: These are net losses of talented Ontario residents. When you take the in-migrants and the out-migrants, I think for the first time ever—at least as far as we could tell—we have had year after year of out-migration from Ontario. That's certainly the opposite of what you would expect, considering Ontario's history, our enormous economic potential and the talent of the entrepreneurs and business leaders in this great province.

It really began in 2003-04: "in-migrants to the province, 57,000," approximately; "out-migrants, 64,000—a net decline of roughly 7,000 individuals." It's unfortunate, but it could have been addressed at that point in



time—a 7,000 loss. In 2004-05, that number of net out-migrants grows to almost twice the level, to 11,000. In 2005-06, the number of in-migrants is actually lower than it was in 2003-04. So fewer people were moving to Ontario, despite our population expected to be growing. There were fewer people moving to Ontario to find work, and the out-migrants increased from 64,000 in 2003 to 73,000 in 2005. The net out-migration from Ontario: 17,501.

1650

In 2006-07, the last year that we had this data compiled: 107,590 out-migrants from Ontario, dwarfing in-migrants, for a loss of 36,196—an unbelievable loss of talented individuals chasing jobs in other provinces.

Where have all the good jobs gone? If you look at the statistics, Ontario has gained 410,600 net new jobs since October 2003. When you bear down on the numbers, over half of these new jobs—208,100, to be precise, are public sector jobs, versus a mere 136,700 new private sector jobs. It's a good report; I recommend it. The growth in government has been larger than the growth in private sector jobs, which is at odds with what most provinces experience and certainly at odds with Ontario's history. The 208,000, the expansion of government jobs in Ontario, is about equal to the population of Kitchener, just to put that into perspective.

The total number of jobs in Ontario, when you include public and private sector jobs, was 6.6% since October 2003. This is a number that government members will brag about; they'll say, "We've had this great job creation of 6.6% since October 2003." So, over four years, only 6% job growth. It's meagre. But let's put this into further perspective. Across the nation, the average growth was 7.6%, so Ontario again, sadly, under Dalton McGuinty, is behind the rest of the provinces. Across the same period of time, the total number of jobs in Alberta and BC has increased by 15% and 13% respectively—more than double the rate of growth here in the province of Ontario. Ontario is the only province in Canada to create more public sector jobs than private sector jobs since October 2003. Ontario has witnessed the slowest growth in private sector job creation in all of Canada.

Let me tell you what they were. Private sector job creation growth since October 2003: Ontario, 3.2%. It has probably gone down, given some of the unfortunate financial news of early 2008. But as of the publication of this report, 3.2% was Ontario's growth rate in private sector jobs. The next closest: Quebec, at 5.7%. No; it's Nova Scotia: 3.8%. PEI: 11.9%; Newfoundland, 6.6%; Manitoba, 8.1%; Saskatchewan, 11%. Alberta and BC, I spoke about: 15% and 13%, respectively, in private sector job creation.

This tells you that something has gone wrong here in the province of Ontario. I know that if you listen to the Premier's responses in question period, he will say, "It's the dollar." One of his favourite places to appoint the blame is that the problem for Ontario is the dollar. Certainly the dollar has increased relative to the American dollar in the past couple of years. Correct me if I'm

wrong, but don't we have the same dollar in Saskatchewan? Don't we use the same dollar in Quebec? Don't we use the same dollar in PEI, whose job creation figures doubled those of the province of Ontario?

Dalton McGuinty also says, as my colleague from Samia-Lambton says, "It's fuel prices." As far as I know, last time I was in British Columbia, they filled up the cars with the same gas as we do here in Ontario. They still use the same types of energy sources that they do in other provinces. There's nothing different in that sense.

*Interjection.*

**Mr. Tim Hudak:** As my colleague from Beaches-East York says, it's more expensive in these other provinces for gasoline, on average.

So other provinces face the same dollar, other provinces face the same fuel input costs. What's this other excuse?

**Mr. Paul Miller:** Globalization.

**Mr. Tim Hudak:** "Globalization," my friend from Hamilton East-Stoney Creek says, rightly so. Dalton McGuinty blames globalization as the problem here in the province of Ontario. Some bizarre factor, I guess, for globalization impacting only Ontario. Quebec, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta, British Columbia, Newfoundland, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, PEI and the territories face some other globalization. They have found some way to erect walls around their provinces and only Ontario is subject to the waves of globalization. It's nonsense.

Some will say maybe that's why he's sending the Minister of Economic Development and Trade to China, to try to combat the forces of globalization, or figure out some way to build a great wall around Ontario; what these other provinces I guess have figured out. Come on, it's a bunch of nonsense. Other provinces face the same external tides the province of Ontario does.

As I have indicated, across a number of measures—when it comes to job creation, construction, manufacturing success, growth of their economies—Ontario is at the back of the pack, facing the same challenges the other provinces face. I think that can draw only one logical conclusion, and that is that Dalton McGuinty's harmful fiscal policies have weakened the province of Ontario to the point where it's much more difficult for us to compete with the other provinces and states. You've seen the results in the manufacturing job losses and the slowdown in our economy to the point of potentially experiencing a recession in 2008.

I call it the Dalton McGuinty recession, because it is Dalton McGuinty's fiscal policies that stand out from all the other provinces. I asked him one time what made him so smart. Why did he have different ideas and stick to them, compared to the other provinces that have demonstrated success? I don't know if I have an answer to that, particularly, that I want to voice here in the assembly, but I've yet to hear a good answer from the Premier as to why he thinks that his outdated tax-and-spend policies are the right approach when all information points at the opposite conclusion.



When an NDP government in Saskatchewan, an NDP government in Manitoba, a Liberal government in British Columbia, a Conservative government in Alberta, a minority Liberal government in Quebec and Conservative governments on the east coast all pursue different policies to make their provinces more open for business investment, Dalton McGuinty goes the opposite direction with his old-fashioned tax-and-spend policies that have put Ontario on the brink of a Dalton McGuinty recession.

What do John Tory and the Ontario PCs recommend as an alternative?

**Hon. David Caplan:** Where is John Tory these days?

**Mr. Tim Hudak:** In fact, my colleague would be very pleased to hear that John Tory today hosted a press conference pointing out the gargantuan growth in the number of government workers receiving \$100,000 a year plus, particularly focusing on upper management and the significant increases they've received in their pay packages; widely out of whack with what real working families in the province of Ontario are experiencing.

In fact, I think the minister knows of the growth rate of those in the \$100,000 club: some 20 or so VPs at the Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corp., by way of example. When you looked at the number of people on the sunshine list, it was eye-opening. Maybe I'll get to that. If I have time, I will get to the sunshine list because you were so kind to ask about John Tory's press conference today, and I appreciate your curiosity.

John Tory and the Ontario PCs recommend an acceleration of plans announced in the fall economic statement to eliminate the capital tax for all businesses immediately. I think my colleagues know that the government had some \$5 billion more in revenue than they projected they would have in the 2007-08 budget. All of that pretty well has been socked away into base funding. Surely they could have found some room to lower the tax burden, including the elimination of the capital taxes for all businesses immediately, like the federal government has done.

Reduce the corporate income tax rate to a competitive level "and reduce the tax burden for small businesses.

"Reduce the regulatory burden on all businesses." I talked about the red tape, and there'll probably be a chance to talk about that in the assembly later on.

Give hardworking Ontarians and seniors a tax break.

1700

There's no doubt that it has become increasingly difficult for working families and seniors to make ends meet in Dalton McGuinty's Ontario. I haven't even talked about the so-called health tax yet, which can be up to \$900 per income earner and their family; and if there are two, \$1,800. Energy and other utility rates have increased. Gas prices are up. Fees were increased, and heaven help you if you had chiropractic care, optometry or physiotherapy when Dalton McGuinty delisted those services from OHIP payment. Now you have to pay out of pocket.

**Mr. Robert Bailey:** Or if you're going to have to buy new tires.

**Mr. Tim Hudak:** Boy, when you have to put on those new tires, as my colleague points out, who knows what kind of new Dalton McGuinty tire tax you're going to face?

The reality, the PC caucus has calculated, is that the average family in Dalton McGuinty's Ontario is now paying \$2,000 more in higher taxes, fees and utility expenses. So we've called for them to get some kind of break.

"Address the looming energy crisis and provide a responsible plan" to replace dirty coal power that will not compromise our future energy supply.

"Begin serious consultations with Ottawa on the subject of tax reform" and develop a manpower strategy to address the looming skilled shortage. That seven-point plan is focused, thoughtful, and one that can turn around the state of Ontario's economy. It's certainly a much better prescription for the future of Ontario than a continuation down the path of Dalton McGuinty's tax-and-spend.

My colleague had asked a little bit about the sunshine list. As I had mentioned, spending under the McGuinty government went up precipitously. As my colleague from Parry Sound-Muskoka said a few short moments ago, "Dalton McGuinty has increased program spending by 48%"—almost 50%. We always think of good old Bob Rae and David Peterson as the poster children for runaway spending.

**Mr. Robert Bailey:** Gargantuan.

**Mr. Tim Hudak:** "Gargantuan" is what some may characterize it, as the last two Premiers are known for their runaway spending. When you look at Dalton McGuinty's increases, they simply dwarf those of the Bob Rae government. They started out spending money significantly and then they had to slow it down to try to balance the books. I think their spending increase over five years was 15%.

David Peterson was the king; David Peterson was the king of tax and spend. He wrote the book. He is in the tax-and-spend hall of fame. Some of the members here were part of that, remembering the glory days of tax and spend, when the NDP took power and they plummeted into recession because of those tax-and-spend policies and had a massive deficit to overcome. We all know that David Peterson's government had the kings and queens of tax and spend. David Peterson, the king of program spending increases, increased program spending 42%.

Dalton McGuinty has increased program spending by 48%. That pedestal, the David Peterson statue that stands in the tax-and-spend hall of fame, is going to be toppled. The brand new, shiny Dalton McGuinty statue will be a tribute to runaway spending: 48% in his five years in office.

But how has it manifested itself? If you're a senior trying to get your husband or wife into a long-term-care home and are on a growing waiting list for that kind of care, you're not seeing that spending going to front-line, long-term-care services. If you're a new mother, worried about your baby, and take your baby to emergency—



we've seen the long wait lists at emergency rooms, whether in Sarnia, Niagara or across the province—you're not seeing that money invested in front-line services. If you're a tender fruit grower and worked at CanGro in Niagara, for example, and are looking for some help in the transition program, you're not seeing that money go to front-line services.

But where are you seeing it? I know my friend the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal had asked me to talk a bit about the Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corp.'s sunshine list, if I recall accurately. The number of \$100,000 earners at the Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corp. has increased—get this—between 2003 and 2007, by 107%, from 86 to 178 people making more than \$100,000 a year. Let's put it into perspective too. I know I keep saying that, but I think this is important. The Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corp. is actually bringing less net revenue to the province today than it has for many, many years. It's in decline. There have been layoffs at the casinos. The border casinos are challenged. I know the minister is concerned about that, and we've had some conversations about that. But I hope he cracks the whip at the OLGC when we see fewer people working at the tourism destinations and we see a 107% growth rate in the number of \$100,000 earners. The salary of the vice-president and chief information officer increased \$86,215, or 43%, since 2003 at the OLGC.

For our interest, the same ministry has responsibility for the Liquor Control Board of Ontario. The LCBO is not at the level of the OLGC in terms of the increase in \$100,000 positions, but I do note that between 2003 and 2007 the number of \$100,000 earners has increased from 89 to 157, or a 76% increase in those in that circle.

If you're somebody who was laid off from Cadbury Schweppes in St. Catharines, if you're a young graduate from McMaster University looking for a job in the Stoney Creek area and you're finding your economic opportunities may be greater to fly on Air Duncan and head out to Saskatchewan or British Columbia, thanks to Dalton McGuinty's tax-and-spend policies, you have to be pretty outraged. You have to be pretty outraged when you see government agencies increasing their payroll in the \$100,000-and-over club by 76% or 107%. I know my colleague the minister will be giving that direction, if he hasn't already, to find some restraint in that spending in middle management and upper management positions at the agencies for which he is responsible.

My colleague from Sarnia-Lambton brought forth a very important issue in question period just this past week when he pointed out the growth rate of the salaries of the top Liberal appointees at the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board. My colleague noted that the salary of the president and CEO has increased by \$140,719, or 55%, since 2003. Is this the former Liberal member?

**Mr. Robert Bailey:** I think I read that.

**Mr. Tim Hudak:** A former Liberal MPP.

**Mr. Robert Bailey:** And federal member.

**Mr. Tim Hudak:** And federal member.

Between 2003 and 2007, the number of paid positions of \$100,000 or more has gone up some 30.2% at the WSIB.

At a time when we read and see on TV that nurses are being fired by the McGuinty government, at a time when we find out that it's more difficult to get a long-term-care placement in a budget that falls very short on addressing some of the real needs in our long-term-care sector, we see that the local health integration networks—this new agency that's been created by the McGuinty government as sort of a belt of middle management between the Ministry of Health and front-line service delivery agents. It was a priority. Dalton McGuinty thought it would be good idea to create these redistributive bodies that actually don't deliver any front-line services.

**Mr. Robert Bailey:** Just advice.

**Mr. Tim Hudak:** They give advice, I guess; make some decisions, I suppose; but don't deliver an ounce of front-line services. The number of \$100,000 earners has increased from 13 to 53 in one short year alone. There were none a few years ago; these things didn't exist. Creating this level of middle management in health care was one of Dalton McGuinty's policy ideas. We voted against it, but he has done so. There were none, obviously, pre-2006; now, up to 53—a 33% increase in one short year. The salary of the CEO in Toronto Centre's LHIN increased 75%, to \$207,946, according to the sunshine list.

1710

MPAC, the Municipal Property Assessment Corp.—and hopefully I'll have some time to address some concerns about MPAC—under the McGuinty government, increased—you thought the OLGC was large, Mr. Speaker; get ready for this. MPAC has increased the number of people making \$100,000 a year or more by 208%. It has gone from 13 to 40—208% at MPAC. This is at a time, mind you, that property assessments have been frozen. Remember: Dalton McGuinty cynically froze property assessments—in 2007, was it? No, 2006; my apology; until after the election. It was a hot issue. Assessments were going through the roof. They had no answers. Some Liberals voted against our efforts to try to cap those assessments. So assessments have been frozen. No assessments have been happening, aside from new residences. Assessment values are frozen at the level of January 1, 2005, yet somehow, between 2003 and 2007, the number of positions making \$100,000 a year or more has increased by 208%. What are these folks doing?

On this topic, by the way, the bill does address the Assessment Act but falls well short of what's going to be needed. As you are probably well aware, Mr. Speaker, now that we're through the election, Dalton McGuinty's cynical cap or freeze has come off.

**Mr. Robert Bailey:** Look out.

**Mr. Tim Hudak:** He froze them to get through the election; now they've come off in 2008. My colleague from Sarnia-Lambton says, "Look out," because we will be hit with a triple whammy—three property assessment increases hitting all at once. The value will go from



January 1, 2005, to January 1, 2008, so homeowners, seniors and families, young people trying to work their way up the ladder will get a triple whammy of property assessments all at once.

We will continue to call, on this side of the House, for a cap on those assessments that exists in many jurisdictions in North America, probably representing a half or more of the population on this continent. The Liberal government refuses to do so. To use an example: They talk about a phase-in, and they use—rather cynically, for lack of a better word—a 20% increase over four years. That would be 5% a year. It's going to be the rare home in Ontario that will see only a 20% increase when these caps come off. It's like putting a cap on a boiling pot of water that's coming off this fall. We're going to see high double-digit to triple-digit increases in property assessments. I do hope my colleagues across the floor will support our initiative to cap those assessments when the pressure comes back on this fall.

Because of the failure to address the major economic concerns of this budget, I'm encouraging my friends here in the Legislature to vote against Bill 44 and come up with a real plan to help our economy.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott):** Questions and comments?

**Mr. Michael Prue:** I listened intently to my colleague from Niagara West—Glanbrook for an hour—some of it here, some of it in the ante-room—because I like to watch him on television where I can actually see his face. The one thing about sitting behind a member is that you have to watch most of the stuff from the back. So I watched him and listened intently to what he had to say. He talked about a number of things that, time permitting, I'd like to just touch on.

The first was the failure of the finance committee, the finance committee that travelled through eight places in Ontario, listened to 175 deputations, got 100 written deputations, and the Liberal members never passed a single motion in support of anything that anyone had to say. Four self-congratulatory amendments was all it was to commend the minister for doing a good job; keep doing the good job. There were four of those. Nothing else that anyone had to say found its way into the budget.

He was right that there were dissenting reports. The Conservatives wrote a dissenting report, as did the NDP. Again, none of the views that we put forward and none of the motions that we put forward saw the light of day.

He was right when he was talking about what is happening in the province of Ontario, that the riches of this province are starting to fray at the edges. He's absolutely right. The per capita income is declining to the point where Ontario is in danger of becoming a have-not province.

In the last 35 seconds, I'd like to talk about his last point, which was property assessment and what is likely to happen this year. I worry about that, and I think I need to worry a lot more, because in this budget the government saw fit to put forward some \$250 maximum per year per pensioner for poor seniors. That is the harbinger

of things to come. They would not be putting that in if they were not afraid themselves of what's going to happen when this tax comes back in September or October. That, I can guarantee you, is the real rationale for that.

**Mrs. Maria Van Bommel:** I also listened as the member for Niagara West—Glanbrook talked about the budget and his impressions of the skills-to-jobs action plan. I notice that he got a bit of coaching from my neighbour in Sarnia—Lambton, who also seems to not support the skills-to-jobs action plan. I'm very disappointed in that. When we're back in our respective ridings, which are neighbouring ridings, the member from Sarnia—Lambton has said that he wants to work with me in making sure that we get the Royal Dutch Shell plant coming into St. Clair township; part of that is certainly going to have a really positive impact on both our ridings. So when I look at it, and I hear him saying that he doesn't want to see my constituents, or his constituents, for that matter, get retraining so that they can be part of what brings that plant to our ridings, I'm very disappointed indeed. I think what we need to do when we are looking at possibilities such as that is to provide the skills and the skilled labour force that is required for a plant like that.

There is a change coming in terms of the types of jobs we have. Many people are looking at a second career and they need the training that will be brought forward by that. I think that, in terms of attracting new industries, we need to have our labour force ready to work. They need to be trained and ready. It's part of the attraction that we have. It's part of the package that we offer as a province to new industries, and we need to be able to have those people ready to do that. So I'm very disappointed that the opposition doesn't feel that the skills-to-jobs action plan and, certainly, the second-career strategy are going to provide for a future in our constituencies.

**Mr. Toby Barrett:** The member for Niagara West—Glanbrook does an excellent job as the opposition finance critic. He does an excellent job in a very practical, on-the-ground way, and it's exemplified in his remarks over the past hour. We see this in his travelling with a number of us on the finance committee. He really doesn't miss much.

He mentioned the loss of the peach and pear processing in the Niagara area, and that impacts some of the orchard men in my riding. Of course, we all know the loss of the juice grape processing in the province of Ontario with the shutdown of Cadbury Schweppes. We see no mention of these issues in this budget, no mention in this budget of the tough times that other fruit and vegetable growers are going through.

Fruit and vegetable is labour-intensive, with a heavy reliance on offshore and domestic help. The question is—and we don't see any indication in the budget—how can they meet the future requirements of the minimum wage? How can our fruit and vegetable people compete with the low-price imports?



Other commodities—no specific mention; obviously, hogs, beef, tobacco. Where were these farmers highlighted in the budget?

Taxes—obviously, no tax hikes announced in this budget. These came within a few days afterwards, the tire recycling and electronics recycling tax. I don't remember any promises along those lines.

1720

**Mr. Paul Miller:** I'd like to start off by just saying that I concur with my learned colleague from Niagara West—Glanbrook. We share many similar problems in the Hamilton-Niagara region, whether it be job loss, poverty, lack of communication with Queen's Park. The problem is that we're constantly seeing these promises made by the government, but for some reason, they seem to end in Burlington. I hate to say this, but there is Ontario west of Burlington.

We have a major problem in our area. I could just go on and on about the job loss. It's phenomenal. I really am amazed when I hear government members from Oakville, Essex-Kent, stand up and be upset with me that I was a little disappointed that there were only 300 jobs created in a Ford plant in Essex-Kent—300 jobs. We're losing thousands of jobs in the Hamilton area. All through Ontario, the automotive industry has been hit hard.

I am going, in the future, to bring forth numbers to support my claims so that the government will really sit back and realize that the 300 jobs that they're bragging about—I'm glad 300 people got work, but there were over 700 people working in that plant, so 400 of them don't see any jobs coming their way; half of the people in that one plant, which they're going to re-fit and put back into action—not a new plant, not a new business, just bringing back one that shouldn't have been in the position it's in because of economic problems in this province.

In future days, I will bring forth more and more examples of, stop focusing on one little thing—and all the other things that are wrong.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott):** That concludes the time for questions and comments. I'll return to the member for Niagara West—Glanbrook.

**Mr. Tim Hudak:** I thank my colleagues all for their kind comments. I think my friend from Hamilton East—Stoney Creek is right. I've seen it myself. When Dalton McGuinty, in his limousine, starts hitting the Burlington bridge, he takes out his passport, because I think he thinks on the other side of that bridge he's entering New York State, for all the attention we've received in Hamilton and Niagara.

*Interjection.*

**Mr. Tim Hudak:** Although my colleague from Beaches—East York points out that my story is probably not believable because Dalton McGuinty usually flies when he's visiting Hamilton.

I do have to say I'm a little disappointed in the comments made by my colleague from Lambton—Kent—Middlesex because I know the member from Sarnia—Lambton is a real fighter for jobs in his riding.

It's unfortunate, but the reality is that today you've got to scrap for every job, Lord knows, in Dalton McGuinty's Ontario. When you have high energy rates, the highest taxes in North America, red tape spooling out of every cabinet meeting, runaway spending, you've got to batten down the hatches and fight for every manufacturing job in this province. Sadly, members that are on that side aren't doing a good enough job, because 192,000 have left under Dalton McGuinty.

Let me conclude with one of my constituents who e-mailed me, Bob Biggar from Pelham. He said, in an e-mail:

"I listened to what you had to say yesterday at Queen's Park, and I want you to know that I appreciate very much all that you are doing to raise awareness of the fact that good jobs are disappearing in a dramatic manner. I also listened to what Mr. McGuinty had to say, and he seems to be quite proud of the monies that he is putting into retraining people who need it to find another job. My concern with his self-adulation is that I have no idea why a person would take the time to retrain him or herself for a job that no longer exists. This is the point that I believe totally escapes him."

The problem with their so-called skills-to-jobs strategy is they seem to be training people to hop on Air Duncan and get jobs out in Saskatchewan and British Columbia.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott):** Further debate?

**Mr. Paul Miller:** Today I'd like to discuss the budget. Where is the 2008 budget? That's the question.

What is amazing about the Liberals' 2008 budget is that most of the spending announced has already happened. Budgets are supposed to be forward-looking documents to give to citizens a sense of the direction the government is taking. Budget 2008 made countless re-announcements of decisions presented in December's fall economic statement.

Bill 44, the omnibus budget bill, contains word-for-word the proposal presented in Bill 24 for the fall economic statement in the Legislature. For example, the government announces over and over their decision to accelerate the capital tax reduction and tax changes for small businesses.

What is clear from these reannouncements is the lack of a plan: no plan to revive a troubled economy and disappearing manufacturing jobs, no plan to bring people out of poverty, and no plan on an ever-worsening environment.

The manufacturing crisis: During last fall's election campaign and continuing on through the winter and spring sessions, we in the NDP have been clear that the jobs crisis in the manufacturing and resource sectors is the number one challenge facing this Legislature. Since June 2004, almost 200,000 good-paying jobs in the manufacturing sector have disappeared in this province. This number doesn't include the almost 10,000 direct jobs lost in forestry that have decimated many northern Ontario resource communities that I'll address more directly a little later.



Since Dalton McGuinty came to power, Ontario has lost 18% of its high-paying manufacturing jobs. That's \$6.6 billion in wages out of the Ontario economy. That very scary number of 18% sounds good compared to the absolute devastation of the manufacturing sectors that communities such as Hamilton have endured, where 30% of the manufacturing jobs have been lost. But all this pales in comparison to the hit that Windsor has taken, where close to 40% of the manufacturing jobs have disappeared, and which now has the second-highest unemployment rate in Canada.

Here are some other numbers that demonstrate the depth of the jobs crisis in Ontario's manufacturing and resource sectors:

- Under the McGuinty watch, 10,000 forest sector jobs worth \$869 million to the Ontario economy have been lost. Northerners have lost seven out of 10 of those jobs.

- Ontario manufacturing employment stood at 913,000 in February 2008. That's a loss of almost 200,000 manufacturing jobs since July 2004, or about 18% of total manufacturing jobs.

- Auto parts and assembly, steel and forest products have been particularly hard hit.

- Statistics Canada has found that the average worker who has lost a job in the manufacturing sector suffers a 25% drop in wages in his or her new job. That's a loss of \$10,000 in wages per worker.

- Manufacturing jobs paid an average of \$20.68 per hour in 2007. That's significantly above the average hourly wage of \$18.42 per hour.

For the past four years, the NDP has been sounding the alarm over this crisis in our manufacturing and resource communities and putting forward such constructive solutions as a jobs protection commissioner, an industrial hydro rate and tougher plant closure legislation. These are good ideas, and the NDP will continue to fight to make them a reality. Unfortunately, the government has rejected all of them.

More recently, we in the NDP have proposed an ambitious but doable three-part jobs stimulus package, consisting of:

- a manufacturing investment tax credit;
- an aggressive Buy Ontario program for all transit vehicles of 50% of contract value;
- the immediate investment of \$350 million in federal labour adjustment funds in vulnerable communities.

The credit would be 10% of investments in new machinery, buildings and equipment. An added incentive of a 20% credit would be available for investments in green industry jobs. This is an idea that has been widely endorsed by economists and has been implemented with impressive results in Manitoba and Saskatchewan. The federal government also provides just this sort of credit in the Maritime provinces. In its budget several weeks ago, Quebec became the third province to endorse the idea and will offer a provincial credit shortly. And apparently, Mr. Ramsay, in his interim report on manufacturing, also

endorses the concept. It's right there on page 28 of the budget.

Unfortunately, rather than simply introducing a provincial manufacturing credit in its budget, the government has reverted to its unfortunate habit of pointing fingers at Ottawa and merely recommends that the federal government offer a credit for Ontario.

So, economists, labour, business and three provinces think it's a good idea. The government's own manufacturing adviser thinks it's a good idea. But when it comes to actually committing some funds at a time of unprecedented pressures on the manufacturing engine of the Ontario economy, all the government can do is point its finger at Ottawa.

1730

I'd now like to turn to the crisis in care in our long-term-care facilities.

Treating our parents and grandparents with some dignity: The sad fact is that in this province, after four years of promising a revolution in long-term care, there are still no minimum standards of daily nursing and personal care for seniors living in long-term-care facilities and homes. With the release of this budget, it's become clear that Ontarians can't trust the Minister of Health and his government to take health and long-term care seriously. This first became painfully apparent when the minister, in a not uncommon display of poor judgment, said that he would personally test an adult incontinence product used by residents in long-term-care homes. The minister's remarks were clearly uncalled for and beside the point.

But the real insult to our parents and grandparents is contained in the numbers presented in the budget. The \$155.5 million in new money this year will only result in a paltry six minutes of increased care—unbelievable. This is clearly inadequate. To achieve a guaranteed 3.5 hours of daily care—the level of care recommended by most experts—at least 60 minutes of increased care is needed. I repeat: The NDP believes seniors in long-term-care homes deserve a guaranteed minimum standard of nursing and personal care of 3.5 hours a day; a minimum standard of hands-on care of 3.5 hours a day. It would ensure that, at the very least, our seniors get the basic support they need every day in their lives. After a lifetime of building our province and our communities, our seniors deserve better, and a minister who at least shows serious concern for their plight.

There are other health care priorities that were missing in the budget. In its health care motions to the finance committee, the NDP proposed a number of practical measures that should have been implemented in the 2008-09 budget. All were voted down by the Liberal majority on the committee and were missing in the budget.

In addition to long-term care, the NDP health care motion contained the following measures: Funding for community health centres—CHCs—and the aboriginal health access centres—AHACs—to provide publicly funded oral health care such as checkups, fillings,



extractions and emergency care to all Ontario children who have been shut out by the high cost dental care; special funding to a provincial network of CHCs and AHACs in order to ensure that every Ontarian who needs access to CHCs and AHACs—primary health care—can access these services. This would require the establishment of no fewer than 20 new CHCs and AHACs per year over the four-year mandate of the government, starting in 2009-10; and ending the three-month wait period for OHIP coverage required of newly arrived immigrants. Ontario should take its place with the nine provinces and territories that have seen the value in relieving new immigrants of this additional burden. None of this was acted upon in the budget—none of it.

I would now like to say a few words about the disgrace of poverty in this very rich province.

An anti-poverty strategy: In 2003, Mr. McGuinty and the Liberals promised to end the clawback of national child care supplements. McGuinty broke that promise, but that hasn't stopped him from making it again in 2007. Just as shameful, families and individuals receiving social assistance, both Ontario disability support programs and Ontario Works benefits, are actually receiving less in provincial benefits, when inflation is taken into account, than they were when the McGuinty government was elected in 2003. Ontario's poorest citizens have been falling behind for eight years. When the McGuinty government was elected, over four years later, the poorest amongst us are still falling behind.

Meanwhile, Ontario's working poor are also falling farther and farther behind. In Dalton McGuinty's Ontario, 1.2 million working women and men earn less than \$10 an hour. The government is excited about their 75-cent raise. Well, I don't know about them, but I know I couldn't live on \$8.75 an hour, so I would like them to show me how they can run their budget on that. Those 1.2 million Ontarians are predominantly women, young people and new Canadians. In fact, someone working 40 hours a week at \$8 an hour earns \$320 a week, or \$16,640 a year, \$4,000 below the low-income cut-off point. I don't know how I could live. The NDP believes that aggressive measures should have been taken in the provincial budget to bring the level of poverty down now; not three years from now, not two years from now—now. That simply didn't happen.

For example, the province announced that they are doubling support for meals for children in schools and community centres through the student nutrition program—a great program. However, I don't know if a dollar a week for each child is going to get—I don't even think that would buy me a chocolate bar, and we don't want that in the schools. So we don't have to worry about it because it wouldn't even buy that. Unfortunately, the program is meagre. Even when doubled, \$20 million annually means \$50 a year for each of the 400,000 students expected to benefit from this big announcement; hardly enough to provide nutritious food to children and young people on a regular basis. I don't know what you can get for a dollar a week, but it's not very much.

In the finance committee, the NDP moved a number of motions outlining an ambitious anti-poverty program. Among the motions moved were:

Eliminate the national child care benefit clawback. The government in its budget failed to eliminate this clawback and instead stuck to a timetable that will extend the phase-out over another four years, four more years of these families suffering in this province. Unacceptable.

Immediately implement the full Ontario child benefit that would provide equal benefits to all low-income families regardless of source of income. Again, the government refused to budge from its four-year phase-in timetable.

Introduce a \$10.25-an-hour minimum wage for Ontario effective July 1, 2008, with an annual increase resulting in an \$11 minimum wage in 2011. Instead, the government stuck to its current timetable of \$10.25 an hour by 2010.

In the NDP's opinion, this is not a budget that deals with the very serious problem of poverty in our midst.

Let's talk about property tax reform and fair funding for our cities. The NDP believes that measures should have been included in the budget that would have delivered a fair deal to municipalities. That simply didn't happen, with no announcements regarding uploading the provincially mandated programs downloaded during the Harris era. The NDP planned to rebalance the provincial-municipal fiscal relationship, freeze transit fares for two years, ease pressure on rising property taxes and provide increased support for key municipal services.

The NDP believes that we must return to a timetable when families paid fair property taxes and got good value for their money in municipal service, such as police, transit, waste disposal and parks and rec. The problem is that it's just not that way any more because the McGuinty government is proceeding too slowly.

Provincially mandated social programs on the municipal property tax: As a result, property taxes are up, the quality of services is down, and today's families are paying a price in higher property taxes. In the area of Hamilton, where I'm from, we pay one of the highest residential taxes in Ontario because 70% of our tax base was based on industry and 30% residential. Well, it's reversed now because of all the major companies that pulled out. Old people are being forced into retirement homes, into facilities, because they can't afford to pay their taxes. It's unacceptable. Why isn't this government looking at residential relief for the Hamilton area?

The NDP argued for a fair deal for municipalities that would rebalance the fiscal relationship between the province and the municipalities by relieving property taxpayers of the burden of paying for provincially mandated programs. This budget clearly failed to deliver on this objective.

In addition to uploading provincially mandated social programs, Ontario desperately needs a top-to-bottom overhaul of its property assessment system. Seniors and others on fixed incomes simply cannot afford the double-



digit increases in property taxes year after year while their incomes stay the same.

That's why the NDP's widely acclaimed freeze-to-sale assessment model is so badly needed. This would include reform of the residential property tax assessment model so that no residential properties are reassessed until the property is sold or the owner does more than \$40,000 in renovations; implement all of the Ombudsman's recommendations to reform MPAC. None of these appeared in the budget.

1740

Let's move on to child care—highly touted by the government. Once again, the Liberals have failed to deliver on their 2003 commitment to invest \$300 million of new provincial money to expand the regulated non-profit child care sector. The commitment of \$25 million reannounced in this year's budget will have little impact on the quality or affordability of child care. A publicly provided high-quality affordable child care system that provides space for every child is possible. Quebec is building a quality child care system where two thirds of the children have access to a \$7-per-day program. The Liberal government has failed to provide any leadership, and 330,000 of our children in Ontario have been long forgotten.

Today, the NDP tabled Bill 26, which takes an important step on child care. The bill would restrict new child care licences to not-for-profit operators while renewing licences for existing for-profit operators. Bill 26 ensures that public money is spent on children, not profit, and prevents big-box child care providers from operating in this province. If you want to follow one of the operators, follow the one from Australia. The quality has gone down. He's expanding, making hundreds of millions of dollars, and child care where he operates is on the downslide big-time. Unfortunately, just a few hours ago, your government voted this very important bill down.

My favourite topic, municipal infrastructure: Municipalities across Ontario are facing massive infrastructure deficit, a result of the provincial cutbacks in the 1990s. Over the last 15 years, the responsibility for funding infrastructure has been shifted heavily towards municipalities, who lack fair revenue-raising tools and are forced to increase property taxes or reduce the social services they were told to provide. The municipal infrastructure deficit is piling up and now is in the \$65-billion range. In water and waste water alone, the deficit is \$30 to \$40 billion, and the government announced \$1 billion or so. That might be enough to repair the damaged Skyway Bridge cement, but it's my understanding that \$450 million of that money is going to stay in the greater Toronto area and some to Mississauga. So if you take the remaining, let's say, \$500 million and spread it all over Ontario, I don't think a lot's going to get fixed. These numbers translate into day-to-day impacts on quality of life and productivity. We hear often of the crumbling roads, lack of adequate transit and pipe breaks that cause major traffic delays.

This government has addressed the infrastructure deficit in an odd way. Rather than designating a long-term sustainable funding formula that Ontario's municipalities can count on year after year, the province has funded municipal infrastructure on an ad hoc one-time basis. It is only when there is money left at the end of the year that this government has chosen to fund infrastructure. No clearer is this policy direction than the recent introduction of the Investing in Ontario Act. Under this piece of legislation, municipalities are rewarded with infrastructure dollars when the government incorrectly forecasts the size of their surplus. Infrastructure funding shouldn't be about odds-making, gambling and one-time surpluses. This government must show some leadership and create a new long-term infrastructure funding program that addresses the infrastructure deficit, which will only climb.

Environment: In April 2007, Environmental Commissioner Gord Miller said that the Ministries of the Environment and Natural Resources were starved of funding for core functions. At that time of unprecedented public concern for the health of the planet, Ontarians may find it hard to believe that these two ministries are today struggling with fewer resources than in the early 1990s, but that is unfortunately the case. Without adequate resources, government ministries will be unable to develop the new regulations on energy efficiency and greenhouse-gas caps that are required to address climate change, nor will they be able to enforce existing regulations.

What did we see in this budget? A joint increase of 3.5% for the ministries.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott):** Questions and comments?

**Mr. Wayne Arthurs:** I listened intently to the member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek. I really just want to touch upon, in the limited time, four or five areas that he referenced during his 20 minutes.

Along the course of the 20 minutes, he spoke about manufacturing and didn't recognize the move in the budget to eliminate the capital tax retroactively on manufacturing and resource industries, which will result in about \$190 million back to those industries in an effort of assistance to them to continue to invest and grow and sustain manufacturing in Ontario. Examples of where we've had some recent success—I know, out my way, and I know the member from Oshawa and members aren't here, but the Oshawa truck plant just announced a callback as they need to push out more of the Silverados and the plan for a change-over. So certainly, there's life in the economy, particularly in areas such as the auto industry.

We spoke rather extensively in regard to finance committee activity. I guess the Liberal members didn't necessarily agree with the NDP campaign platform because much of what he was speaking of was their platform. We didn't agree with that and obviously neither did the people of Ontario, in the vast majority. We've dealt with the minimum wage—\$8.75 as of March 31, midnight; a further 75 cents in each of the next two years



to bring it to \$10.25, just as we had committed to. It doesn't sit well with the member opposite. They wanted something else, but it's what we committed to. We committed to it before the election and we committed to it during this budget process.

As we look at new business opportunities, the 10-year income tax exemption for new businesses for intellectual properties from Canadian colleges, universities or research institutes are the way of the future in creating innovative technology here in Canada and here in Ontario, not unlike what happened with the likes of RIM. We're offering, though, a 10-year tax exemption. A number of things in our budget directly address the economic situation the province finds itself in currently, all of which are quite positive.

**Mr. Bill Murdoch:** I'm pleased to speak for a couple of minutes on the Hamilton East–Stoney Creek member's statement here. He's quite right. He pointed out a lot of deficiencies within this budget. This budget was long on rhetoric and short on details. That's the problem. This government goes out and mentions a lot of things, but we don't really know whether it's going to happen, because look at what happened in the past four years. It's pretty tough for them to keep their promises because they love to promise everything to everybody and sometimes they just can't keep them.

One of the ones I like to talk about is the agriculture one. They brag about what they did for agriculture, but they absolutely did nothing for the poor farmers out in the field who are putting in seed; the beef farmer; the pork farmer. They did absolutely nothing for them. Sure, they added some money here and there for a few things at university and that, but that's not going to help the farmer out in the field. They did absolutely nothing for that person, and that is really disappointing because farmers feed us. There are going to be a lot of farmers upset.

I know that across the way, they'll say, "The OFA thought it was fine." When farmers come to my office and they're complaining, I will send them to the OFA and let them decide what they're going to do because I think that the leaders of the OFA really misunderstood this. Maybe they want to run for the Liberals—I have no idea—but I'm certainly disappointed with the members of the OFA for saying, "What a glowing budget," because they didn't do anything for us.

It certainly is nice to see that the Minister of Agriculture is here today and listening to us because I know she'll do her best to do what she can, but she's working with a caucus that really doesn't understand rural Ontario. That's their trouble. She has difficulties. I know she tries to do her best, but when you've got a caucus that doesn't understand rural Ontario, what do you do? You just do your best and hope something sometimes comes up good.

**Mr. Michael Prue:** I listened intently through the entire speech of the member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek. One has to remember that he is a relatively new member of this Legislature. He obviously has done his homework and he has obviously taken the time to study

this budget and to understand the implications of what is in it. He spoke passionately in a number of areas and should be commended.

I do have to take some umbrage at the comment by the member from Pickering–Scarborough East. He was dismissive of what this member from Hamilton–Stoney Creek had to say and put it to down to so much NDP rhetoric in election campaigns. I think that the member clearly reflected on what he had to say. He would be more mindful of the 175 deputants who came before our committee, 175 people who said virtually the same thing as the recommendations that were made to the committee by form of motion, and 100 people who wrote written submissions, none of whom were listened to. Those people asked for most of the same things that the member for Hamilton East–Stoney Creek had in his submission.

**1750**

They asked for things like a \$10 minimum wage now. They asked for living conditions for people on ODSP and Ontario Works to improve now. They asked for the building of substantial housing now. They asked for all the things that the member for Hamilton East–Stoney Creek had to talk about. They were concerned about the environment.

I would say to the honourable member opposite, the member for Pickering–Scarborough East, the member who is the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Finance and who had carriage of what took place during the committee, that he should have been listening during that committee. He would have heard the people of Ontario speaking to the same things that the member for Hamilton East–Stoney Creek had to say today.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott):** We have time for one last question or comment.

**Mr. Bill Mauro:** I appreciate the time. As we sit here this evening and most evenings, it seems that we see the same theme replaying itself here over and over again. On the left, we're hearing from the NDP that we're not spending enough money in our budgets. On the right, we're hearing from the Conservatives on a regular basis that we are spending too much money, although on a regular basis we have the Conservative members visiting our ministers on this side of the House, asking for support for particular projects in their ridings. So the same theme continues to repeat itself here in the Legislature. It's unfortunate.

What we hear in our budget is a fiscal capacity to make investments in the services that the people in Ontario value. Unfortunately, today we saw both parties make an attempt to politically exploit an issue that appeared in one of the local Toronto newspapers about nurses in a particular hospital, when in fact it's the fiscal capacity in our budgets that has allowed us to address that very same issue.

You know very well that in the last four-year mandate of this government we were able to hire close to 8,000 more nurses through investments in public services. That's the kind of thing our friends across the way are arguing against. They will also know very well that in



this year's platform, leading up to the election in 2007, we made a commitment to hire 8,000 or 9,000 more nurses. One of the things that I learned first, after the election in 2003, was that there are many health care providers in Ontario who are very upset when hospitals consistently—

*Interjections.*

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott):** I would ask the members of the House to come to order and allow the member for Thunder Bay–Atikokan to complete his remarks. I'll give you some extra time.

**Mr. Bill Mauro:** Thank you, Speaker.

We do know on a regular basis that there are many health care providers in this province who were thrilled with the policy position taken by our government, by our Premier and by our Minister of Health, who moved toward getting hospitals to sign accountability agreements so they would have to live within their budgeted means. By doing that, we were able to free up resources to invest in other health care providers right across the spectrum. It's a good thing; we've done good work. The attempted political exploitation today was a bit unseemly.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott):** The member for Hamilton East–Stoney Creek has two minutes to reply.

**Mr. Paul Miller:** I thank the members for Pickering–Scarborough, Thunder Bay–Atikokan, Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound and Beaches–East York for their comments. I'm a little disappointed with the members for Thunder Bay and Pickering–Scarborough East. It appears that they didn't like what they heard, and I'm a firm believer that the truth hurts. So I'm assuming that they'll come to their senses in the next few years in this Legislature. I'll be more than happy to show them the way to the land of promise, where people are equal—equal in this province. I don't think they understand that their people are equal and they deserve the same as everyone else.

Getting back to the comments from my joint member for Beaches–East York, I'd like to thank him for his comments. That's what I believe we are in House for: to debate. If the member for Thunder Bay–Atikokan doesn't want to debate things and he thinks we're using this as a political tool, that's unfortunate, because this is the only way that the opposition has an opportunity to talk and challenge the government on decisions they make in a majority government.

I'll be looking forward to future exchanges from that member. I hope he understands and tries to show the respect that the opposition parties deserve.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott):** It being 6 of the clock—at least according to the Speaker's watch—we will now move forward.

*Debate deemed adjourned.*

## ADJOURNMENT DEBATE

### INTERNATIONAL TRADE

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott):** Pursuant to standing order 37, the question that this House do now adjourn is deemed to have been made.

The member for Parkdale–High Park has given notice of her dissatisfaction with the answer to a question given today by the Premier with respect to the planned trip to China of the Minister of Economic Development and Trade. The member has up to five minutes to debate the matter, and the Premier or his designate may reply for up to five minutes. I recognize the member for Parkdale–High Park.

**Ms. Cheri DiNovo:** I'd like to start with a quote: "Individuals have international duties which transcend the national" or provincial "obligations of obedience.... Therefore, [citizens] have the duty to prevent crimes against peace and humanity from occurring." That's from the Nuremberg war crimes tribunal, but I think it's extremely appropriate for this circumstance.

What we are asking—the people who care about human rights in Canada, and the entire Tibetan community not only in Ontario but around the world—is that people consider at this time any trips to China. That's number one.

But also, number two, the Premier made some vague comment about what was going to be discussed on that trip to China. I heard vague words around what the Minister of Economic Development and Trade was going to be doing over there and saying over there—something to the effect of human rights, so I wanted to address that.

I also want to address the Premier's statement that he met with the Dalai Lama. Last November, His Holiness the Dalai Lama came to Toronto. My office tried repeatedly to find out if the Premier would meet with His Holiness the Dalai Lama. We not only spoke to him, we also spoke to the Lieutenant Governor. We were working closely with the Tibetan community in Ontario, and we got a negative response.

We then proceeded to try to plan to hold a reception for His Holiness. After all, this is a Nobel Prize winner. He is the head of state. It's a state in exile, but he's still the head of state. We felt that it was the duty of the government of Ontario, just like the government of Canada had done and just like the government of the United States had done, to meet with His Holiness, to actually accord him and the Tibetan people that dignity. They refused. We were going to continue to open up this House, presumably of democracy, to His Holiness and his advisers. The advisers then told His Holiness that they would not want to meet here unless the Premier met with them, because His Holiness would consider that a snub.

I'd like to know when the Premier actually did meet with His Holiness, because it certainly wasn't this last



November when we asked him to. So I'd like some clarification on that.

Also, the clarification around what the Minister of Economic Development and Trade will be doing or saying in China when she goes—this most secretive of trips that, again, this government chose not to broadcast like they did the trip to India, which was broadcast with all the fanfare of a royal retinue. Or the trip to Tokyo—ditto. I remember the comments about Tokyo Rose.

We knew about those trips. We didn't know about this one. We had to dig and, again, we still don't know when she's going. We're trying to get information out of her executive assistant, to no avail. The Tibetans are trying to get a meeting with her, to no avail up to now. Let's hope that changes.

These are the three requests we have of the Minister of Economic Development and Trade. They're not mine alone; they're those of Tibetans around the world and Amnesty International:

(1) ask that foreign journalists be let into the country of Tibet;

(2) stop the arbitrary arrests, incarcerations and, I would add, murders of Tibetans;

(3) ask the Chinese government to sit down and negotiate with His Holiness the Dalai Lama.

Now, I believe the people of Ontario who are listening would think these are pretty modest requests for a people like the Tibetans in exile. They're not asking a great deal. Would it be so much for the Minister of Economic Development and Trade, now that we've discovered she's going to actually do the human thing, the right thing, and ask this of the Chinese officials she meets? David Miller has said he would. David Miller has sent a very strongly worded letter to the Chinese embassy, again because we asked him to. Will she?

I close, finally, with a quote that we all know, that the only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good people to do nothing. In that spirit, I appeal also to the backbenchers in the Liberal caucus, I appeal to Tories, I appeal to us all. This is not about partisan politics. This is about doing the right thing for people who are being murdered and incarcerated as we speak. You have the power to do something. Are you going to use it? She has the power to say something. Is she going to say it?

**Mr. David Ramsay:** I'm pleased to represent Premier McGuinty today in response to the question from the member for Parkdale-High Park. We take this issue very seriously. As you know, the federal government is in charge of foreign policy in this country. As a province, we take the lead of the federal government.

Every day in this House opposition parties and members stand up in their place and criticize this government for not creating jobs, for not expanding the economy. What we're doing is engaging our second-largest trading partner. Ontario is a trade jurisdiction. That is a big part, a majority part, of our economy in this province. We're blessed to be a trading jurisdiction in Ontario and China is the second-largest trading partner.

We continue with the constructive engagement that is the policy of this country, which Canada was a pioneer in with countries like Cuba and China, to engage them at all levels, whether economic or political. Through that, we are able to create understanding and to transfer our beliefs through those relationships. We continue to do that.

I was very shocked when the member interrupted the Premier in his response. The Premier stated how he had met with the Dalai Lama and all of a sudden the member opposite said, "You did not," and interrupted the Premier.

**Ms. Cheri DiNovo:** In what decade? In what decade did he meet with the Dalai Lama?

**Mr. David Ramsay:** When the Premier was first elected, the Canadian Tibetan Association of Ontario had given the Premier notice that in the following spring, in May 2004, the Dalai Lama would be in Ontario and presented him with an official invitation. I have pictures here of the Premier with the Dalai Lama. I can give that to the member afterwards.

You referred to a trip when the Dalai Lama came to Ontario last fall. There was no formal invitation to the Premier of Ontario at that time. I understand that some of our members met with him—the member for Etobicoke-Lakeshore, I believe. But there was no formal invitation from the Dalai Lama. Of course, the Premier, as he had before, would obviously have been willing and wanting to welcome the Dalai Lama to Ontario. So he's done that and is very supportive of the Dalai Lama.

I would just say to the member that I would hope you would believe the word of the Premier when he said he has met him. I will send those pictures over there. I would say to the member that we think it's very important to continue that engagement with China, our second-largest trade partner. It's the proper way to go. At that time, our trade minister is going to be able to engage the country on all issues.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott):** This House stands adjourned until 6:45 p.m.

*The House adjourned at 1804.*

*Evening meeting reported in volume B.*

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of Ontario**

First Session, 39<sup>th</sup> Parliament

**Assemblée législative  
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Première session, 39<sup>e</sup> législature

**Official Report  
of Debates  
(Hansard)**

**Journal  
des débats  
(Hansard)**

**Tuesday 8 April 2008**

**Mardi 8 avril 2008**

Speaker  
Honourable Steve Peters

Président  
L'honorable Steve Peters

Clerk  
Deborah Deller

Greffière  
Deborah Deller



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## LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 8 April 2008

## ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 8 avril 2008

*The House met at 1845.*

### ORDERS OF THE DAY

#### ONTARIO HEALTH PREMIUM

#### CONTRIBUTION-SANTÉ DE L'ONTARIO

**Hon. David Caplan:** I move that the standing committee on finance and economic affairs, as constituted by the assembly, review the Ontario health premium in accordance with section 29.2 of the Income Tax Act.

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier):** The deputy government House leader has moved government notice of motion number 18. The deputy government House leader.

**Hon. David Caplan:** I'm going to be sharing my time with the member from Pickering-Scarborough East, the very able and capable parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Finance. My hope is that all members of the assembly will support this motion so that the matter can move on to the standing committee on finance and economic affairs and we can continue to implement the program of this government.

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier):** I recognize the member for Pickering-Scarborough East.

**Mr. Wayne Arthurs:** Thank you, Speaker. I appreciate that. I'm pleased to speak to this motion tonight and anxious to see this motion brought before the standing committee on finance and economic affairs, under the capable leadership of the Chair, to have the debate around the Ontario health premium. As a member of that committee, I know the balance of the members of the committee are also anxious to have that opportunity.

I'm going to use my time this evening to speak a little bit about the plan we have—and had—and the record of success that we've achieved in managing the health care system in Ontario during the past five years, which was a direct outcome of our election. Certainly a very important part of that was the Ontario health premium, as part of the Income Tax Act, to make sure that we had the fiscal resources to be able to do exactly what the people of Ontario asked us to do, both in 2003 and 2007.

Our plan for achieving better health care is about keeping Ontarians healthy—not just about curing illness—providing high-quality care if they do become sick and sustaining the overall public health system for gene-

rations to come, not just for a year or two but for our children, our grandchildren and their children.

We're building on the success we've achieved in the past four years by investing in the universal public health care system. Investments in this system contribute quite significantly to Ontario's advantages as a place in which to invest, a good place to do business. It helps by lowering costs to business. If you have a healthy workforce, certainly the cost of business is lower. People are at work rather than staying home ill. It enhances the productivity of the province's workforce. Healthy people can go to work and do their jobs in a far more effective fashion than those who are laying in bed or in hospital, needing care at a stage when it's really late, when in fact we should be looking at far more preventive opportunities. And it helps in providing and supporting a high quality of life that is attractive to skilled workers.

People want to be in this province. They want to work in this province and in this country. You only need to travel and talk to our friends south of the border on occasion to hear how much they envy our health care system here in Ontario which provides the level of care that they so much would like to have at various points in their lives.

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We came to office in 2003. At that time, my predecessor was the then Minister of Finance, who presented her last budget at the Magna empire in Aurora. We know what that was all about. It was about a \$5.6-billion deficit when we arrived. But the minister, government and members of the day were convinced in their own minds—or if they weren't convinced, then they really weren't being terribly straight with us—that they had a budget that was balanced. I'm not sure what led them to that belief. It certainly wasn't the numbers that led them to that belief. It was probably the tainted Kool-Aid.

We had a choice. We could have delayed the changes that Ontarians had voted for, or we had to ask Ontarians to make a further contribution to make up for the deficit that was left by the previous government, the deficit portion that we needed to manage the health care commitments that we had made. So a portion of that deficit—in effect, the health care portion—was covered through the new health premium as part of the Income Tax Act. We managed the balance through prudent fiscal management, savings we found in government and some support, obviously, from a healthy economy. We made the choice to invest in health care because Ontario families couldn't wait. They couldn't wait two, three, four or five more years, given the state of the health care system at that



point, for us to take the very actions they had asked us to take at that point in time.

I know, on this side of the House—the members here, including the Premier in his leadership role—that it was a tough choice to make. It was a tough choice because we had indicated a certain strategy we had in mind but we hadn't anticipated what we would find when we arrived here. But we made that choice. The government stood firmly behind that choice. In hindsight, it was certainly the right choice to make then and it's the right choice as we stand here today. It has meant, during the past five years now, that we've managed to have more doctors throughout Ontario, more nurses throughout Ontario and shorter wait times in particularly critical areas, in targeted types of areas. It has meant that we've put in for more free vaccines for our kids, that newborns have the opportunity to be assessed for disease that otherwise might have gone unnoticed. More newborns are getting additional screenings to catch diseases much earlier.

We were chatting just a few moments ago with one of our members here about the juvenile diabetes pumps and how well that's been received. Those things wouldn't have happened if we hadn't had such a strong commitment to health care. I don't think it would have happened if we hadn't had to make that very tough choice to invest more money in the system and stand so firmly behind the needs of Ontarians when it comes to their health.

It has meant shorter wait times for hip and knee replacements, CT scans, cardiac surgery, cataract surgery and other activities as well. As a matter of fact, I was in seeing my own doctor just in the past week or so. Some of the procedures that we take as standard for gentlemen my age and ladies my age, we're now finding those wait times—when I saw him a couple of years ago, his backup was about a year long before we'd get hospital time. Now, we were chatting, and he said, "I'm very pleased with the additional investments." It has meant more money in the hospitals, more money locally, and the wait times are down to four and five months for the procedures that are so important: screening to ensure that we remain healthy and, in the event that there's something going on within our bodies, that he's able to catch those things early.

The government is improving access. We're shortening wait times, we're promoting wellness through our health promotion ministry, we're preventing illness and we're modernizing the health care infrastructure.

We continue to invest heavily in e-health strategies, something that's direly needed. It takes a long time to get in place. With credit to the former government when it is due, they certainly undertook some of those initiatives. We've followed along that course of action. It will be some time before we have the e-health capacity that this province would so much like to see. But we're not going to get that unless we make the financial commitment to it and unless we're firmly behind health as a principal and priority area for spending and research in the province of Ontario.

The Premier is very fond of saying that for this province and this economy to truly succeed, we need everyone to be at their very best. "To be at their very best" means that they have to be healthy. That seems to be a pretty good start. How often do we say, "If you have your health, you've got everything"? It's important. When it comes down to it, "If you have your health, then you have everything." That's why these investments are so critically important.

The health premiums allowed our government to make unprecedented investments in our health care system, and I want to talk a little more about some of the positive ways that we made improvements to public health and how we've sought to resolve some issues that were left behind.

During the past five years, we have increased funding for hospital activities by \$3.5 billion. That's no small amount. It's hardly chump change. We have increased funding for OHIP services by \$2.8 billion—not just funding in the hospitals, not just those activities you need for direct care, but also the management of your health through the OHIP system. With those two things alone—without getting too far along—if I look at it, we have about \$6.3 billion in increased spending for hospitals and OHIP services in and of themselves.

We have increased funding for Ontario drug programs by \$1.2 billion. This is particularly important to our seniors. The Trillium health drug plan is an important part of them maintaining their health, and it's these kinds of investments that allow us to be able to provide that level of care.

There's been increased funding for long-term-care homes—over \$1 billion in long-term care.

When you start looking at the quantum of the money that's been invested over the past five years, you begin to see the progress that has really been made. There are times in this Legislature where we've been talking about an element of—one piece of—long-term care or one piece of hospital care or one piece of OHIP care. But when we start looking at the quantum of the monies that have been invested and the outcomes that we're getting from those, you see the wisdom in having made the investments we did in ensuring that health care is a key priority for government.

Enhancing the quality of care for some 76,000 residents in long-term-care homes is so vitally important. That's not 2,000 or 3,000 people; that's 76,000 seniors who need that level of care.

We've increased funding by \$800 million for community services by expanding home care and supportive housing. It's not just what happens in the doctor's office or what happens in the hospital or what happens in a long-term-care home; it's also what happens directly within the communities in which we live.

There has been increased funding of \$600 million for public health promotion to ensure that people have the opportunity and are aware of the need to stay healthy, to do the kinds of things or the type of activity that keeps them healthy, so they're not, at the end of the day, draw-



ing upon the health care system unnecessarily. We want people to draw upon the health care system, the hospitals and doctors, when it's needed, and not because of neglect. To achieve that, we need to educate people. We need to build into the culture of what we do that health promotion is the first step in a healthy lifestyle.

There has been increased funding by some \$1.2 billion to Cancer Care Ontario, emergency health services, mental health services and a variety of other programs. Each of us in this Legislature and our families, in all likelihood in one fashion or another, have been touched by cancer. As I mentioned to my colleagues just this morning, in the past week I've had a member of my family pass away from cancer. I know the treatment that he received, the support he had in the hospitals in his last few months when the prognosis was terminal—how important that was. So, on a very individual basis, I understand and can touch and feel the real need for the investments that we've made in our system.

The plan is working. It's working to help Ontarians stay healthy and provide better care when they need it. The McGuinty government is proposing, in the 2008 budget—we've been talking about that as well in the past few days—a total investment of some \$40.4 billion in health care in the coming fiscal year. That's up from about \$29.5 billion in the 2003-04 budget year. That's a \$10-billion increase. That money is going into health. It's going into the doctors; it's going into nurses; it's going into hospitals; it's going into long-term-care homes; it's going into drug benefit plans; it's going into the physical infrastructure that's required—all of which the province desperately needs to have happen for the growing population, the aging population, the population we want to see stay healthy, and a population that we want to ensure that if they're not healthy, we can do everything we can to assist them back to a state of health.

The Ontario health premium has helped to ensure that our government has the ability to do exactly those things. It's certainly not the only piece. We mentioned some \$40 billion in expenditures. The Ontario health premium is in no way a large portion of that, but it's a critically important portion, and I think it's critically important from the standpoint of the priorities that we set on health care.

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Every penny of the Ontario health premium is going toward improving Ontario's health care system, and this revenue helps to ensure that the government's ability to maintain health services is intact.

In this coming fiscal year, revenue from the premium itself is projected to be about \$2.8 billion. That's up, I think, from about \$2.4 billion, when it was first introduced, and that's a reflection of the growing economy we've had. This represents about 6.9% of total expenses for the ministries of health and long-term care and health promotion.

So, you see, it's only a very small portion of the overall part, but a critically important part if it were not there and available.

There's certainly discussion along the way about eliminating that health tax, taking it out of the system, removing \$2.8 billion or more from the system. That would be a dramatic cut to the system. We can't go back to the days where we had nurses in large quantities across the province losing jobs. We can't go back to the days when we didn't have doctors available to us. We can't go back to the days of closing hospitals.

We're making very significant investments in our infrastructure, our hospital infrastructure in particular, and we're going to need the revenue stream that goes with that, on a go-forward basis, to ensure that we can operate the existing, the renewed and the new facilities.

We can't be closing hospitals and emergency rooms, and we can't be losing hospital beds by the thousands. That's the experience we had before 2003. We can't be allowing medical school spaces to just flatline and not get addressed.

We lost the potential for hundreds of doctors over about a five-year period, from the late 1990s into the early part of this century. We didn't increase the opportunity for foreign-trained doctors, and we missed opportunities that would have existed there as well. We lost thousands of nurses.

We've been down a particular road, and the elimination of the health premium, the lack of focus on health care as a budgetary priority, would do nothing but take us back to where we were.

We've made very strategic investments and achieved very tangible results in the past five years. The government and those who are providing health care, the service providers, have worked very hard to ensure that health care has improved for all Ontarians.

In fact, more than 500,000 Ontarians who didn't have a family doctor a few short years ago now have one.

During the last five years, from 2003 to 2008, more than 8,000 new nurses have been hired. They're providing services to each of us and our families and those in our communities in hospital settings, in home settings and elsewhere.

We're proposing in the budget to increase the family health team numbers by adding 50 new health teams, starting this year, to the 150 that are already in place. These are particularly important because we're going to be focused on rural and underserved communities. We all know the issues that exist in those communities when it comes to attracting and keeping physicians, when it comes to having the type of care that's necessary, when it comes to the proximity to that care. It makes the capacity to have the health teams so very important to those communities—it tends to augment what otherwise might be more limited, a direct opportunity to have ready access.

For those in northern Ontario, the budget, this year, is proposing to add about \$13 million to the northern health travel grant. Those from northern Ontario are probably more aware than I may be of the needs of their constituents to be able to get to health care. If people can't afford to get there, they need a means to get there. Adding



some \$13 million to the northern health travel grant will help to ensure that people in northern Ontario, more remote areas, are achieving the same level of access, the same opportunity for access, that might exist for those who live in more urban or southern environments.

We've more than doubled the number of training and assessment positions for internationally trained medical graduates. Some 200 physicians per year have been added since 2004. We're taking advantage of the expertise that's out there. We're taking advantage of those who have been trained elsewhere. We're taking advantage of those who have come to this country and want to practise the skills they have, to help augment what's here and also to give them an opportunity to take advantage of their chosen professions.

We're also proposing in the budget to move toward the hiring of 9,000 nurses by 2011-12, in that budget year. That's going to take some additional investments of \$500 million over three years.

We're proposing a further \$90 million in this budget year to support full-time employment opportunities for Ontario nursing graduates. I think one of our great successes was the commitment to full-time employment to nursing grads who choose to stay here in the province. If we're taking the opportunity to train those young people—more often young people—it certainly is an advantage if they choose to stay here in Ontario to practise their skills. If we can offer them full-time opportunities to get started, it's likely they're going to settle down in their own communities, settle down here in Ontario and practise their skills throughout their career.

The government is improving access to health care for seniors as well. The proposal to hire some 2,000 nurses for long-term-care homes and provide \$107 million over about three years to move toward the hiring of 2,500 more personal support workers in long-term-care homes will go a long way to add additional support to those in our community, mostly seniors, who need to have and take advantage of the long-term-care-home opportunities.

We are also calling in the budget for \$278 million over three years to address various programs that are needed in these long-term-care homes. We know the issues around physiotherapy that is needed, the personal support that is needed for seniors in those facilities. These monies will help to augment that in a significant way.

We're looking additionally at \$700 million over three years to invest in the aging-at-home strategy. So many of our aging population would prefer to stay in their own homes, either with the support of a spouse, a partner or a caregiver. But to do that they need to have the capacity from the community at large, the professions at large, to come and add additional support. It should be, and is, something we want to achieve, allowing seniors, those who need that care, the dignity of being able to stay in their homes and have the quality of care that's possible before they would have to transition to some other type of care.

We've increased first-year medical school enrolment by 23% between the time we took office and this year.

That's a fairly significant increase in the percentage of new grads coming out of medical school.

We're going to expand the nurse-practitioner-led clinics by providing some \$38 million over three years. I think that was a question this afternoon. The Premier spoke briefly to it, about the importance of nurse practitioners and nurse-practitioner-led clinics.

More health services are available now in the community than ever before. This includes the government's funding for residential hospices as a part of an end-of-life care strategy. As each of us have an opportunity over a period of time to watch loved ones as their lives end, an opportunity to do that in a comfortable, home-like, supportive fashion is something we would probably all want to see. Hospitals are not the best place in which to have one's life end. Although the care is great, if one can find a means by which the residential hospice program can provide a more conducive, family-oriented, comfortable style of life in those last days and weeks, it's certainly better for those folks and something we should be continuing to invest in.

We've increased the number of community health centres to 76 from 54, and the number of satellite CHCs to 27 from 10, serving an additional 200,000 Ontarians. I know one of those satellites is planned in my community. Actually, the first of the community health centres that was there was an offshoot of a youth program that was started in one of our community facilities. They found they had to move down the road. There wasn't a facility available. Because of the growth in the community, this satellite is now a very comprehensive community health centre, focusing primarily on young people, which is really interesting. They have a number of programs. They encourage young people into their programs to get health care. So I'm very anxious to see the completion of the satellite CHC.

In this budget, just this year alone, we're proposing to increase to 200 from 150 over the next four years the number of student spaces for primary health care nurse practitioners and to expand the number of undergraduate spaces for midwives, up to 90 from 60 over the course of a year.

#### 1910

Not only are we looking at how we can get more nurse practitioners in the system but at what other professionals we can augment by providing additional spaces that will help with health care. Midwives are a great way to do that. A lot of young women, primarily, who would have their children in a hospital are now considering midwives and midwifery as an option, but to be able to support that we need to have the midwives in place. With their support, it keeps those young ladies out of the hospital at a time when they're giving birth. It's certainly a cost savings to the system. Those resources can be used elsewhere, but it is also a far more natural form of childbirth for them.

The results show that since 2005 the government has achieved real success in reducing wait times in very key procedures. I want to give you just a couple of very



specific examples with respect to the wait time reduction, as we put together a wait time strategy and, with the Minister of Health, put together a means by which these could be monitored, could be promoted, could be shown to be accessible for folks.

**Cataract surgeries:** The wait time is now down 191 days, or reduced by 61% from where it was.

**Angiography:** The wait time is down some 26 days, almost half the time that one would have waited earlier for angiographic assessment.

**Knee replacements:** The wait time is down 196 days, almost 50%. Those in this Legislature and elsewhere who have family members who have had knee or hip replacements know the pain they go through during the time they wait for those replacements. In the case of knee replacements now, by cutting the wait time by almost half, they can move on with their rehabilitation and get back to a very normal life.

**CT scans:** The wait time is down from 32 days, or almost 40%.

When we start talking about the percentages, we've cut the time by more than half: for cataract surgeries, down 60%; angiography, 47%; knee replacements, 45%; CT scans, 40%; hip replacements, 37%; angioplasty, 32%. Although not down to the same degree as some of these other assessed matters, even cancer surgeries are now down some 15% in their wait times.

To further reduce wait times, the budget is calling for some \$17 million over a three-year period to fund the operation of an additional five MRI machines, resulting in some 21,900—almost 22,000—additional scans. Without that type of assessment, it's hard to move forward in identifying exactly what the problem is and getting folks on to necessary procedures that allow the activities to occur.

The budget proposes further to decrease wait times by investing \$180 million over three years to create incentives to shorten emergency department wait times and improve patient satisfaction. I can tell you that in our own community, with the redevelopment that is going on at the local hospital, the Ajax-Pickering campus of the Rouge Valley Health System, a significant amount of that investment is going into the emergency department. It's probably now handling about two to two and a half times what it was designed for. As projected, it will probably be handling about three times the number that it was initially designed for by the time the redevelopment is completed and the new emergency department is open.

We desperately need, not only in my community but throughout this province, to be able to invest in the quality of emergency care that gets people in and gets them the service they need, to the extent that they have to go into another process, whether it's being hospitalized or something more modest—or get them in and get them out again, to determine that the emergency care is much more limited. But having folks wait for extended periods of time even to be assessed just adds to the stress level that goes on, and often we end up with assessments that probably are more conservative simply because there's

an anxiety that exists about providing a type of assessment that will allow someone to go home more readily.

To assist those hospitals in very high-population-growth areas—and certainly the 905 Golden Horseshoe would be among those; not the only ones, but just the concentration of population—we're proposing to invest some \$120 million over three years specifically to assist those hospitals in high-population-growth areas to help meet anticipated demand that's going to come.

To make some further improvements, the number of general surgeries proposed in the budget is proposed to increase by about 12,500 cases during this year, rising to some 30,000 surgeries by 2010-11. That's a lot of additional surgeries that folks are anxiously and necessarily waiting for.

We want to continue to focus on active and healthy lifestyles, health promotion and illness prevention. Ideally, if we can prevent illness through health promotion strategies, fitness strategies and healthy living, we will save ourselves and the system a lot of unnecessary costs and apply those resources against those in our community who really need them. We're proposing to invest some \$47 million in 2008-09, growing to some \$239 million in just three short years, in e-health systems such as the diagnostic imaging systems, the drug and lab information systems and the diabetes registry, as just examples of things we're trying to achieve.

We have some recent examples, which include the implementation of the smoke-free Ontario strategy. We took our lead from a number of municipalities in which smoke-free actions were well received by communities-at-large. The province picked up on what others had done in that regard and made it a more composite strategy throughout Ontario. It's being well received throughout the province.

In addition, we've added vaccines, as I mentioned really early on. Three vaccines were added free of charge to the roster of recommended childhood vaccinations. Those savings could be anywhere up to about \$600 per child, per family. That's a big savings to a family with a newborn child.

We're proposing to increase prevention and the early identification of chronic diseases. We want to start with diabetes. There's some \$100 million in new funding to work on that increased prevention and early identification strategy.

I know that we have the resolution, the motion that's before us, to have the Ontario health premium as part of the Income Tax Act moved to the standing committee on finance. I, for one, as I'm sure with other members do, look forward to the opportunity to have it before us.

I have a lot more that I could add to the activities that the government is undertaking in respect to our health system over the past five years. To a large extent, that's as a result of the health premium; not in the composite total dollars, but certainly that's a big part of it. More important, in my view, is the capacity for us to focus our attention very effectively, in a very concentrated fashion, on health of Ontarians. The health premium, of which



every dollar goes to health care, is helping us to be able to provide the very core and important investments we're making to improve the health of Ontarians. I look forward. I hope this motion sees its way through so it can go to committee and we can have the debate there, at the standing committee on finance and economic affairs, before the matter is brought back before this Legislature for further consideration.

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier):** Further debate?

**Mr. Tim Hudak:** Mr. Speaker, I'm just confirming the rules on a motion. I—

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier):** Just to explain, with the help of the table, if you refer to standing order 25, you'll be able to understand that there are no questions and comments on this motion.

**Mr. Tim Hudak:** Thank you for the clarification.

I'm pleased to respond to the motion on behalf of the PC caucus, as the finance critic.

*Interjection.*

**Mr. Tim Hudak:** No, my friend, you have another hour. You sat through the first one, you poor fellow, and now you've got to sit through a second one.

I listened closely to my colleague for Pickering-Scarborough East, who is the finance parliamentary assistant for the government. I assume he'll be hanging out with us again at the finance committee when this motion is enacted. I look forward to that committee, I suppose, just to see what is really going to happen at that committee. I'll describe why I'm curious momentarily, whether this is actually a review of the so-called health tax or if it's just an exercise in redundancy and the members have already been given their marching orders and will simply approve the tax, give it a blessing and continue on. I hope it's not the latter. I hope that there will be a genuine review, with witnesses called forward to talk about it, to offer suggestions. But that remains to be seen.

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I do take a bit of exception to my colleague from Pickering-Scarborough East's comments. To hear him tell the tale, this is one heck of a health tax. He spoke about an increase in funding of \$3.5 billion to hospitals, \$2.8-billion increase in the OHIP budget, a \$1.2-billion increase in the Ontario drug benefit plan, \$600 million into health promotion, \$1.2 billion to Cancer Care Ontario, mental health and some other programs, for a \$10-billion increase in health spending. To hear the member describe that, boy, this is one miraculous little health tax. It brings in approximately \$2.6 billion, perhaps up to \$2.8 billion, this year. So how this tax manages to bounce around from the hospital budget to the OHIP budget to long-term care to health promotion and multiply itself by a factor of four and five is nothing short of miraculous; how a \$2.6-billion income tax increase can finance a \$10-billion increase in annual spending—we may as well call it the breads-and-loaves tax. It's almost like the Lord's miracle itself is happening when it comes to tax revenue, to see that multiplied several times over, which I think belies the Liberal

argument that this funding goes into any particular program.

I know my colleague, an intelligent individual and experienced lawmaker as well, knows that this money simply flows into the consolidated revenue fund, the giant treasury hanging out there at the Minister of Finance's office. Every dollar that a working family or a senior pays in the so-called health tax goes into that big pot of revenue over at the treasury office. You could have said that the health tax goes to pay for all the highways in the province of Ontario. It also pays for police. It also pays for funding for municipalities. It also pays for cultural products and tourism. This miraculous little health tax multiplies itself like the bread and loaves.

**Mr. Robert Bailey:** The industry minister's trip to China, maybe?

**Mr. Tim Hudak:** Maybe, as my colleague says, it's paying for the Minister of Economic Development and Trade's junket to China later in the week as well.

I know that seniors who are living in Mount Hope or a middle-class family in Fenwick would not happy to contemplate that the \$600 to \$900 that they may be giving up as a family would be financing a trip for the Minister of Economic Development and Trade to Shanghai, I guess it is. Or is it Beijing? We're not sure exactly, because the whole junket has been very secretive. We're not sure when or where. Maybe I'll get into that a little bit later on. I want to make some introductory comments about the bread-and-loaves tax.

I will take issue with my colleague. I know he will say certain things as the parliamentary assistant, but I think we all know full well that it's nothing more than an income tax increase that flows into the consolidated revenue fund; and who really knows exactly where it goes at the end of the day?

Just for the heck of it, I had my hard-working staff, Trisha Rinneard and Joel Hoidas dust off good old Bill 106. Bill 106 will live in the halls of infamy when it comes to broken promises, because Bill 106 was the one entitled An Act to implement Budget measures—Honourable Greg Sorbara, first reading June 21, 2004; a day that will live in tax infamy because it brought in the so-called health tax.

In case we have forgotten, Dalton McGuinty made a promise to taxpayers, in order win votes in the 2003 election, that he wouldn't raise taxes.

**Mr. Robert Bailey:** He signed his name to it.

**Mr. Tim Hudak:** He signed his name to it, signed a document with the Canadian Taxpayers Federation. He spent hundreds of thousands, millions of dollars on television ads where he looked through the screen and looked people in the eye and said, "I will not raise your taxes." Maybe I needed a bigger screen. I didn't see his fingers crossed down below the screen. Maybe I didn't watch the end of the commercial where he sort of winked at the camera and said "I don't really mean this." I suspect the game was afoot for Dalton McGuinty to say, "You know what? I will make this promise to win votes in the next election, and then we'll bring in a tax increase



once we're safely secured with the keys to the Premier's office and such." That is why Bill 106 by the Honourable Greg Sorbara, June 21, 2004, will live in the tax hike hall of fame and in the broken promises hall of fame.

I did hear a good joke once, that this was Dalton McGuinty's GST, because it stood for the Greg Sorbara tax. Have you heard that one before? No? I heard that one came from the Liberal caucus, actually. Maybe not. So this is the Liberal GST, the Greg Sorbara tax, the infamous broken promise tax. Here we go.

You'd think that maybe the Ministry of Health Act would have been opened up when this so-called health tax was brought in—that the money would go to the Ministry of Health and therefore it would be the Ministry of Health Act or something like that. But, interestingly, it's the Income Tax Act that is amended in Bill 106 in the hall of fame of broken promises.

It says, "The Income Tax Act is amended to impose a tax called the Ontario health premium." Oh, it's just in name only. It's actually an income tax increase, it says right here in the bill. "The new section 2.2 imposes the tax and the new section 3.1 governs how it is calculated. Consequential amendments are made to other sections of the act." That's the explanatory note, as you will recognize, Mr. Speaker.

So you turn to section 1(1) of the Income Tax Act definition: "Ontario health premium," in quotes—it's ironic. It's in quotes; it really is in quotes. "Ontario health premium" means the tax described in section 2.2."

So it's not a premium, or the latest parlance that the environment minister uses, "fee"; it's nothing but a tax hike on the backs of families and seniors in the province of Ontario.

Section 2:

"The Act is amended by adding the following section:  
"Ontario health premium

2.2 (1) Every individual shall pay a tax, called the Ontario health premium, for a taxation year ending after December 31, 2003 if the individual is resident in Ontario on the last day of the taxation year."

Section 4 goes into considerable detail on how to calculate the new income tax that Dalton McGuinty brought in. I'll get into those levels momentarily, but there's considerable detail devoted to how to calculate this new income tax, I remind you again, called a health premium in name only—the bill itself says it is a tax on income.

This is interesting. There's actually a section in here about how to calculate the health tax upon somebody's death. You'd think if it were actually a health premium, some sort of user fee for health care, you wouldn't pay it once you're dead; it just wouldn't make sense. You might want a rebate, for example, depending on your circumstances. But like an income tax, you'd have to pay it on the income earned during that year, whether you used the health care system or not. I found it rather ironic that even in death the tax is charged under certain circumstances.

The other interesting thing we came across, Mr. Speaker, and maybe you've encountered this in your con-

stituency office, is that of provinces that actually have a health premium, a real, genuine health premium, which is a user fee for the health care system—you get rebated. You get rebated if you leave the province, for example, because you're not using their provincial health care system. Therefore, you can get rebated. I can't remember the province in particular, but I'll say British Columbia by way of example; I may be wrong, but it's a western province. If you move to Ontario, you could actually have that rebated.

We had constituents where the shoe was on the other foot, where they were charged a new income tax that Dalton McGuinty gussied up as a so-called health premium, moved to another province and then were trying to get a rebate from the Ministry of Finance. Because the Ministry of Revenue really wasn't created then to welcome Minister Chan into the assembly; it was all at the Ministry of Finance at the time. They were trying to get a rebate and they thought that since this is the way it works in other provinces where there is a health care user fee, they would be rebated because they'd moved out of the province. But no such luck. I know you're in suspense, thinking they must have received their health premium back because they moved from the province and they no longer used the health care system, but they found out to their chagrin that it was nothing more than an income tax and therefore fully payable despite their residency in another province.

So no refunds. It's a health premium in name only. In reality, as illustrated by Bill 106, it's an income tax hike on the backs of middle-class families, lower-income individuals and seniors in the province of Ontario that flows directly to the consolidated revenue fund.

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Let me talk a bit about this exercise, though, because we're debating the motion before us tonight. My intention is to support the motion. I would like to see this actually reviewed as outlined in legislation and at the very least, perhaps for entertainment purposes, see how the government members on the committee are going to act, if there will be a genuine review process or we simply sit down and vote before we get our first coffee and move on with a lopsided vote calling for the Dalton McGuinty's income tax increases to continue.

Here's the other point I forgot: Bill 106 also has in it this review mechanism that we're debating tonight:

"Review of Ontario health premium

"29.2 (1) A standing or select committee of the assembly shall be appointed to review the Ontario health premium within four years after this section comes into force.

"Same

"(2) The committee shall begin its review on or after the date specified by the assembly, which date shall be no earlier than June 30, 2008, and shall report the results of its review to the assembly no later than December 31, 2008."

I suspect that section was added so that Liberal members could go into the next election campaign and



say, "Wow, it's going to be reviewed. We had to do it, we had no choice"—that's the cover language they use—"but it will be reviewed. Don't worry about it. We can do something about it down the road."

So section 29.2 exists in the legislation. But then, boy, old habits die hard. Every penny raised in Dalton McGuinty's income tax increase, and then some, has been spent on runaway spending. Witness recently the 110% growth rate in the \$100,000 club, for example. So Dalton McGuinty decided, "You know what? I need that money." He basically did.

Even the former finance minister, Minister Sorbara, had indicated in the run-up to the 2007 election that the health premium was part of his budget for 2007-08 but it would be reviewed subsequently, in 2008. Remember that? A bit of leg was shown there and he said, "We'll flirt a little bit with taxpayers and we'll review the health tax in 2008." Then Dalton McGuinty contradicted Greg Sorbara, then finance minister, in the run-up to the election campaign, and used an expression like, "I need the money."

March 19, 2008, in scrums, a member of the media asked the Premier, "Have you decided not to review the health tax?" He responded, "We're mandated by law to review the health tax, and we will do that." The follow-up question, an obvious question: "Are you going to overrule that in the budget?"—meaning, overrule the sensibility of a review, I guess. The Premier responded, "I made it very clear before the campaign and during the campaign what my view is on that." "So what's the point of going through the review?" the media ask. The Premier replies, "Because we're legally obligated to do so. I think the outcome is pretty predictable."

So again, I look forward, at least out of curiosity, to see—the Premier has already made his mind up that he's not interested in changing his income tax increases, but we're mandated to go through the review—what kind of committee process will actually unfold.

I know some of the members in the committee, and I know that they want to do some hard work on this and actually review the income tax increases and come up with some suggestions, I'm sure: to change, to rescind—something like that. But the Premier has made up his mind. He says he needs every penny to fuel his funding for things like, I suppose, the Ontario cricket club that received \$1 million when they asked for \$150,000; we all remember that.

On September 6, 2007, Dalton McGuinty said, "I'm saying if you're looking to me to eliminate your health premium in 2009, don't look to me for that.... We need every single penny of that premium." He says he needs that money.

Do you ever read the St. Catharines Standard? The Minister of Transportation would definitely read that, and my colleagues from Welland riding—the old Niagara Centre—and Niagara Falls for sure. I would encourage members to read it. At the very least, if you're going to be opening up the website for the St. Catharines Standard, go back 11 or so days ago.

The headline: "Health Tax Review is a Pointless Exercise"

The editorial says:

"If a promise is made to do something, but there is no intention to act beyond keeping that initial promise, is it really a promise worth making?"

"Or keeping, for that matter?"

"That is what Ontarians should be asking Premier Dalton McGuinty when it comes to his controversial health care premium...."

"At the time," when the tax was brought in, "many hoped this would mean the beginning of the end of the tax," meaning the review, "that, after five years the government's books would be balanced and the tax would be redundant." In fact, this year the government had \$5 billion in additional revenue beyond even what it projected, meaning that it was really awash in cash, thanks to the sacrifices of middle-class families and seniors in the province of Ontario. But instead of making any attempt to reduce that tax burden or to follow up on these expectations that the health tax would actually be reviewed in a serious manner, Dalton McGuinty and his finance minister decided to pretty well spend every penny of those funds and shovel them out the door.

Let me read that line again; I think I digressed a bit: "At the time, many hoped this would mean the beginning of the end of the tax, that after five years the government's books would be balanced and the tax would be redundant."

"The good news is McGuinty is going to follow the legislation and press forward with the review. The bad news is he isn't going to do anything to the tax that costs every working Ontarian up to \$900 dollars each year."

They have that quote from the Premier: "I think the outcome is pretty predictable," the Premier said last week."

The editorial responds: "Ah yes, there's nothing like a predetermined conclusion to inspire voter confidence in the study."

"If there is no desire in the McGuinty government to scrap, or at least reduce, the controversial health premium, then why is the government wasting resources reviewing it?"

"Despite the tax bolstering provincial coffers for more than four years now, the problems plaguing health care then plague health care today."

"Emergency rooms are still crowded."

"Long-term-care homes are still short beds, which has a trickle-down effect on the availability of acute-care beds in our hospitals."

"The only way to get many non-emergency surgeries or diagnostic imaging done in a timely manner is to go across the border and pay for it yourself."

"Family doctors and nurses are in critically short supply."

That's a St. Catharines Standard editorial. Apparently, Mr. McNeely may have read it—I'd encourage him to do so. In their conclusion: "There's a funny relationship be-



tween governments and revenue; it's not unlike that between smokers and nicotine.

"It's an addiction.

"Never mind that in the mad dash before the end of the fiscal year McGuinty spent nearly double the \$2.6 billion raised by the health tax each year; if the tax were cut, McGuinty would have less to dole out to his pet projects," wrote the St. Catharines Standard. "Or as the more cynical may call it, less to buy votes with."

Good for the Standard. They pinned the tail on the proverbial donkey there. They called it as they saw it, that for this so-called health tax—a bit of an income tax increase—a line was put in Bill 106 at the time to try to have an out so they could say to taxpayers, "Don't worry; in the next election it will be reviewed—hint, hint, nudge, nudge, vote for me. It'll be gone." Then we see, several months after the election, in March of this year, Dalton McGuinty says, "I changed my mind and I need that money."

You know, as I said a bit earlier, old tricks die hard. A leopard can't change its spots. The same kind of thing is happening with this tire tax, by the way; the same sort of thing.

*Interjection.*

**Mr. Tim Hudak:** Yes, I know. They're not calling it the tire tax premium; I guess they're calling it the tire tax fee, to try to disguise it as another tax grab. It is ironic. History is repeating itself. It was Yogi Berra, right? "Déjà vu all over again." Is that his line? It's the same sort of thing. Premier McGuinty, before the election, says, "I have no intentions of raising this tax." Safely elected to office, he has the Premier's limousine, he has the staff, the \$100,000 club, all that kind of stuff: "You know what? To heck with what I said before the campaign. I'm going to bring in this tire fee tax once in office."

Let me go back a little bit. You might remember—the Liberal line has changed a little bit. They're saying now that the health tax is necessary because it funds \$10 billion in health care expenses. Even though it's a \$2.6-billion income tax increase, this somehow funds \$10 billion in health expenses. The original cover story here—remember this, Mr. Speaker?—was that they needed it to fix a structural deficit. Remember that? I'll have a few comments here to debunk this notion of the structural deficit to begin with.

But what is revenue up? Is it \$26 billion, \$28 billion, something like that, in the last little while? The health premium is \$2.6 billion, \$2.8 billion of that. Sorry; see, I got caught in that propaganda. Dalton McGuinty's income tax increases—\$2.6 billion, \$2.8 billion of that. So this notion of it being to finance the structural deficit is a bunch of—is "hokey" parliamentary, Mr. Speaker?—horse feathers, as my colleague from Niagara Centre likes to say. It's simply fuelling runaway spending.

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But back in the day, Dalton McGuinty said it was needed to fix a structural deficit. Then what did they do? I was talking to my friend from Northumberland the

other day here in the assembly. He said, "Well, the Auditor General did a study, and the Auditor General said there's a \$5.6-billion deficit, and that's why we needed this income tax increase gussied up as a health tax."

It wasn't the Auditor General, right? We've heard people say this in the assembly. It's not the actual reality. It wasn't the Auditor General. Erik Peters was no longer the Auditor General. He was hired in the capacity of a consultant, paid for this particular work and given a bunch of assumptions to try to force a certain conclusion—great for the cover story. I think that's the reality. That's my recollection, because Erik Peters was not the Auditor General at the time, and he was given a bunch of suggestions.

What were the assumptions Erik Peters was told to have in his report? "I think that the economy will basically stay in recessionary circumstances," something to that effect, or very, very slow growth. Basically, Erik Peters was told by the finance minister to assume that the effects of SARS and the effects of the hydro blackout would be throughout the entire year, and assume that kind of growth rate for revenue. Assume also, therefore, that agencies like the LCBO, the Lottery and Gaming Corp., and other sources of non-tax revenue, would similarly experience recession-like circumstances. They also told him to assume that the government could find absolutely no savings whatsoever. Even though this government says it finds a billion dollars of savings—I don't think they've actually demonstrated that, but they say they find a billion dollars in savings each year—Peters was told, in his capacity as a paid consultant by the government, to assume no savings could be found, that there would be absolutely no asset sales whatsoever.

Mind you, the election was in October 2003. We were pretty much in election mode through summertime. The writ was formally dropped in late August or early September, something like that. The budget was April? Late March? So basically, the then-PC government was in office for less than half a fiscal year, and then the McGuinty Liberals took over for the other part of the year. I think everybody knows that any kind of deficit figure is for a year, not for a short number of months.

Here is the important point, though: Despite that, despite the myth surrounding Erik Peters's report and the trumped-up circumstances the government had as his underlying assumptions, despite that, when he came out with his numbers on October 29, 2003, Dalton McGuinty said there was a \$5.6-billion problem. Then what do you think he said? I don't know if my friend from Ottawa—Orléans remembers. He might say, "Well, he said he's going to bring in this health tax." That's actually not in keeping with what happened and therefore not part of reality. Interestingly, after this report came out—this smoke-and-mirrors report, October 29, 2003—do you know what Dalton McGuinty actually said? It would impact his government's ability to implement some of their platform, but he would still not raise taxes.

So let's get this straight: Dalton McGuinty's mythology around his income tax increases has been, "We



needed it to fix a structural deficit." The mythology that some of the members opposite talk about is that the auditor came up with this number; it's not true at all.

**Mr. Robert Bailey:** They drank the Kool-Aid.

**Mr. Tim Hudak:** I think a lot of Kool-Aid has been passed out over there for the past four years, because the reality is not in keeping with what actually happened on the historic record.

Anyway, Dalton McGuinty's one-time mythology was, "We needed the tax to pay for a structural deficit." But he actually got that report back in October 2003—a couple of days before Halloween, ironically—Dalton McGuinty said he's not going to raise taxes. Here we go: McGuinty news release, October 30, 2003: "The McGuinty government ... will ... maintain personal income tax rates." How about that? This looks like the promise that kept breaking itself.

That's kind of what he said during the campaign. He has this report in hand that he has doctored up to suggest that there's a \$5.6-billion structural deficit. Despite that, he says, "We're going to maintain personal income tax rates." And I showed you how he actually, months later, increased income taxes in Bill 106.

Well, maybe he made a mistake. Dalton McGuinty is prone to say one thing and do another; I think my colleague from Northumberland would acknowledge that. He says one thing and does the opposite.

On November 1, 2003—my birthday, by the way; that's why I remember this.

*Interjection.*

**Mr. Tim Hudak:** Yes, I am a Scorpio. Can you tell?

On November 1, 2003, Dalton McGuinty goes on Focus Ontario—a great show, on a very important network, Global; Sean Mallen does a very good job—and says, "We will not be raising taxes." There you go. Maybe he's going to actually keep this campaign promise.

Then they have the throne speech. Some people say maybe that's when they announced the so-called health tax, income tax increases. But no. The throne speech contained this statement:

"So this new government made a commitment to maintain personal income tax rates at the current level.

"Legislation will be introduced to keep that commitment."

Holy jumping—my grandmother, who used to live in Sarnia, now passed away, loved that expression.

*Interjection.*

**Mr. Tim Hudak:** You know, my grandpa's actually a big NDP supporter.

*Interjection.*

**Mr. Tim Hudak:** I don't know if they would've voted for Bob Bailey, but Bob Bailey, on his own personal characteristics, may have convinced him—who knows?

On November 20, 2003, Speaker, lest you forget, Dalton McGuinty said:

"So this new government made a commitment to maintain personal income tax rates at the current level.

"Legislation will be introduced to keep that commitment."

He was on a roll. He followed it up the next day in the Sudbury Star: "We're not going to raise taxes. That's just not on the table." This is after the election, right? This is after he has his Erik Peters report—months later. November 21, Sudbury Star: "We're not going to raise taxes. That's just not on the table."

There is another one, Speaker, in Hansard. You know Hansard is always right. November 24, 2003: "We are going to maintain personal income tax rates...." And in question period, December 17, 2003—that was the day, by the way, the government released their economic statement of the province's finances—Dalton McGuinty said, "I just don't believe that Ontario families should have to pay the price.... I'm not prepared to encumber them with further taxes." Holy jumping, here he is, just over a week before Christmas, saying he's not going to increase taxes.

So he's had this Peters report for several months after the election and Dalton McGuinty is still saying he's not going to raise taxes. By then, because we're standing here, we would've seen if his fingers were crossed. You would've actually seen that, or caught the wink, wink, nudge, nudge.

This is the crazy one. Are you ready for this one? April 24, 2004, now four months down the road. Back on Focus Ontario, CanWest Global station, April 24, 2004, Dalton McGuinty said, "Well, what we said all along—I am very clear about this—is that we're not going to be raising taxes." April 24, 2004. So you have this trumped-up Peters report—September 22, 2003—right? Am I right about that? No, sorry, October 29, 2003, and then six months later, at the end of April: "I'm very clear about this. We're not going to be raising taxes." What happened three weeks later? Three weeks later, on May 18, 2004, Dalton McGuinty brought in his first budget and announced a whopping tax increase on income of up to \$900 per person, and if you had two income earners in the household, it could be up to double that rate—three weeks later, May 18, 2004.

Now let me point this out: Just a couple of weeks ago, when federal Finance Minister Flaherty visited Ontario on a number of occasions and was pressing the provincial government to reduce income tax rates—

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**Hon. Madeleine Meilleur:** If I was you, I wouldn't talk about it.

**Mr. Tim Hudak:** I say to my friend the minister, this is why it's important to talk about it.

He said he wanted to see Ontario's economy flourish and called for lower taxes in the province of Ontario, which now, sadly, under Dalton McGuinty, leads North America in the highest taxes on business investment. So Minister Flaherty called for these things.

What did Finance Minister Dwight Duncan—and, if I am wrong, I suspect Premier McGuinty—say? "The budget's already been written." Basically, the budget decisions had been made up weeks ago, so there was nothing they could do. They said Flaherty was just playing games, because the budget was already written.



Remember this? The budget was already written, things were under way, decisions were made. But Dalton McGuinty, only three weeks before the budget was brought in, said they weren't going to raise taxes; three weeks later, taxes were raised.

So we either have to believe that something happened in that three-week period, where he suddenly changed his mind after a campaign, saying six to eight times that he wasn't going to raise taxes; or was the budget decision already made all along? Was it already under way? This was a brand new tax increase in the province. There's a complexity to it in terms of the income levels. It's something you wouldn't do overnight, I suspect. So did Dalton McGuinty actually go on Focus Ontario and say that he wasn't going to raise income taxes when he knew full well that in the budget preparation there was an income tax increase? Did Dalton McGuinty actually go on Focus Ontario and say something that he knew was not in keeping with the facts?

We'll talk a bit more about the Peters report. I know my colleagues on the government side like to talk about it a lot, even though they inaccurately characterize it as a report by the Auditor General. I'll leave that on the floor, too. I do hope that in further debate from the government members they'll explain to me why Dalton McGuinty, three weeks before the budget, was saying that he wasn't going to increase taxes, when I suspect the budget process to increase income taxes was already well under way.

Using the Peters report, the McGuinty government argued that a structural deficit was not a one-year anomaly in an otherwise healthy fiscal situation. They argued that it was a structural deficit caused by several years of much faster growth in program spending than in government tax revenues. This was created after the fact, because Dalton McGuinty, right up until three weeks before the budget, was still saying he wasn't going to increase taxes. But this after-the-fact cover story was that Dalton McGuinty would use that as political cover to introduce a significant, permanent income tax increase, the so-called health tax.

If you actually look at the Peters report, if you blow off the dust on it, if you can still find a copy—I suspect a lot of the original copies are buried with the 2003 Liberal platform underneath those new homes on the Oak Ridges moraine—you'll note that Peters clearly concluded that there would be a \$5.6-billion deficit for the fiscal year, based strictly on the assumptions given to him—given to him—by the Ministry of Finance. Peters, in his capacity as a paid consultant, did not say there was a structural deficit. He focused only on a potential deficit in the fiscal year 2003-04, strictly under the assumptions that he was given by the government.

The Peters report was mainly about revenue shortfalls in that one very unusual year. He said that revenue in 2003-04 would be \$4.4 billion less than budgeted, and that represented a substantial majority of the potential deficit of \$5.6 billion, based on the assumptions that he was given. What were those assumptions, again, and how

did they impact Peters's numbers? Peters estimated \$961 million in lower crown corporation revenues because of SARS and the blackout. That's typically the OLGC, the LCBO, and maybe with some other crown agencies. So he estimated \$961 million due to SARS and the blackout. He estimated \$1.16 billion in lower tax revenues due to SARS and the sudden appreciation of the dollar. That's coming from the other general tax revenues. He cited an increase in \$722 million in SARS-related health spending and \$130 million in tourism tax breaks after SARS.

We know, thank God, that SARS didn't last throughout the year.

We also had the blackout that started in Ohio.

The Minister of Finance, the former Minister of Energy—he's actually quite notorious for this—when you listen to his language, he seems to imply that the province of Ontario caused the North American blackout, at least on the eastern seaboard. He uses language to convey that, unfortunately, and I hope that he changes that because he knows that's far from the reality.

Anyway, we had the blackout for some period of time. It was in August 2003.

Peters's assumptions basically were that the slowdown with SARS and the blackout and such would continue throughout the year.

Peters also assumed that \$771 million in increased transfers from the federal government would not flow. In those days, when there was a Chrétien government, you were never really sure if they would keep their promises on transfers to Ontario.

**Mr. Lou Rinaldi:** What is the Harper government doing?

**Mr. Tim Hudak:** Boy, oh, boy. My friend from Northumberland really helps me a lot here.

The biggest increase in the province's fiscal picture has been personal income taxes, which are up \$5.8 billion from 2004 until the plan for 2008-09. The second-biggest increase is \$4.3 billion in transfers from the federal government. This has taken place primarily in the time of the Harper government. I know my friend from Northumberland wants to make sure that due recognition is given to the increase in transfers from the Harper government. I'll give you the numbers.

The Canada health transfer is \$8.8 billion in the plan for 2008-09, and in 2004-05, when your friend Paul Martin was in there briefly, it was \$5.6 billion. The Canada social transfer was \$2.9 billion then, and now it's \$4 billion. So there has been a significant increase in transfers from the federal government.

I'm merely pointing out that your friends Mr. Martin and Mr. Chrétien were not overly generous to the provincial coffers. Maybe your new friend Bob Rae, if he has the opportunity—I don't know if that will necessarily happen. I know that members like the member for Northumberland are very big fans of Stéphane Dion. I find that rather curious. I find him a little bit weak as a leader. I'm not sure exactly what he stands for, and he's having a lot of trouble keeping his party together. But you have your reasons for supporting Stéphane Dion.



I think I've answered the member for Northumberland's questions—that health transfers have actually increased substantially over the last number of years.

Back in that day, you were never really sure if Jean Chrétien would come through with federal transfers for health care, so Peters had assumed that \$771 million wouldn't flow. That was part of his matrix in figuring out what you call the structural deficit. In reality, miracle of miracles, a few months later the transfers did actually happen, as outlined in the Eves budget for that year.

Peters also accepted Liberal assumptions that there wouldn't be the estimated \$381 million in year-end savings, even though Liberals have since included estimated year-end savings in subsequent budgets, increasing steadily to an estimated \$1.1 billion of the 2008-09 budget.

So cumulatively, the one-time issues Peters identified amounted to almost \$3 billion, and together with the CHST, it actually materialized in \$300 million in year-end savings; \$4.04 billion of Peters's forecast is accounted for within a couple of months.

That kind of thing didn't stop Dalton McGuinty, I'll tell you. Even though he promised right up until the budget was being finalized and sent off to the printers that he wasn't going to increase taxes, he went ahead and did just that with his income tax increases disguised as a so-called health tax.

**Mr. Robert Bailey:** The giant sucking sound.

**Mr. Tim Hudak:** The giant sucking sound of jobs to other provinces, or money from people's pockets?

**Mr. Robert Bailey:** That, and the money out of your wallet.

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**Mr. Tim Hudak:** Let's look at some of the figures here. It's important, I think, to look at the current budget and previous budgets to put Dalton McGuinty's income tax increase into perspective.

Projected government revenues in the 2008 budget hit an all-time high at \$96.9 billion, an increase of \$28 billion, or 41%, from 2003. It took from Confederation, John Sandfield Macdonald here in Ontario, to Ernie Eves to get to \$68 billion for government spending, and Dalton McGuinty has it up to \$96 billion in five years.

Dalton McGuinty shredded the Taxpayer Protection Act in order to impose a tax. Oh yeah, remember that? He ignored the option to put the question to the electorate in a province-wide referendum. Remember that? Dalton McGuinty signed that document, put his hand in the air and said that if he were going to break that promise, he'd at least put it to a referendum and put it to the people of the province of Ontario to accept the income tax.

You could have brought that case to them. You could have said, "You know what? We're going to increase your taxes by \$900 each, but we promise you it will go into health care," or what have you. So why not put that to a referendum like Dalton McGuinty said that he would. But one Dalton McGuinty promise is worth as much as the last one, which doesn't get you very far these days. So Dalton McGuinty also ignored that and refused to put

the question in a province-wide referendum like he once promised that he would.

Here is the other zinger. Remember this one? It's almost like we're looking at the old top 10—

**Mr. Robert Bailey:** K-tel.

**Mr. Tim Hudak:** The top 10 hits of the health care record. Here is another one: The McGuinty Liberal government stretched the truth to suggest that all the money raised by the health tax is actually spent directly on health care. This was the original gambit. They said, "Okay, we're going to call this income tax increase the health tax and we're going to promise we're going to review it in four or five years so we can win votes in the 2007 election. And do you know what? Let's figure out some way to try to tell people that it's going into health care."

So grab your 2004-05 budget. Do you have it with you?

**Interjection:** Yes.

**Mr. Tim Hudak:** Well, look through it. Do you remember they listed all of the programs that were funded by the so-called health tax? They actually had a list. This is the brain trust at the time. You know what? If it were genuinely a health premium going into health care services, that would be a reasonable conclusion to make: Here is your health premium; it's going directly into health care; here are the four or five—

*Interjection.*

**Mr. Tim Hudak:** Oh, Lou, you weren't listening to me for the first half hour of my speech. Don't make me repeat it.

**Mr. Lou Rinaldi:** But look at all the hospitals we're funding.

**Mr. Tim Hudak:** You missed my bread-and-loaves line. Your colleague—

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier):** Members, I feel a little left out up here. Direct your comments through the Chair, please.

**Mr. Tim Hudak:** Mr. Speaker, remember that my colleague from Northumberland's colleague from Pickering-Scarborough East said that the Ontario health tax goes into hospitals, into OHIP and the Ontario drug plan, health promotion, Cancer Care Ontario, mental health etc. If you total that up, it's \$10 billion of spending. You tell me how a \$2.6-billion income tax increase finances \$10 billion in annual spending. It is the bread-and-loaves tax. It is amazing how it ricochets to any program of the day that you want to propagandize.

The reality is that it goes into general revenue. Initially—remember this? In 2004-05, it was a legitimate idea at the time. If it truly was a health premium and going into health care, then you list the programs it's going into. So the government in their 2004-05 budget listed the programs that received funding from the health tax. Do you remember that? Come on. It was a good one. You listed them. I should have had the whole list with me. It became a controversy here in the Legislature because underneath the programs funded by the income tax increase gussied up as a health premium, you had listed



sewer projects—remember that?—sewer projects, as well as Ministry of Tourism and Recreation advertisements to encourage exercise.

**Mr. Bill Mauro:** You've grown a beard since you've started.

**Mr. Tim Hudak:** Well, there's just so much history here; it's worth recounting. It spurred a lot of debate within the Legislature. Do you know what their initial reaction was? To describe sewer funding as health care. That was your initial spin. The tourism advertising was also health care, because I guess they were getting up and moving around a little bit to see all the beautiful sights in the province, and you described these as health care. You got to the point, I say to my friend from Northumberland, where you were going to describe pothole-filling as health care because it made it easier for ambulances to drive across. That's about the stretch that was happening in the debate at the time.

That was a major, major embarrassment. I know my friend the public infrastructure renewal minister would have gone back there and he would have said to his friend Jim Warren, who was described today as the chief government fixer, "There's no way that we're going to do this again." Caplan went in there and he said, "No way we're going to do this again." So that whole exercise has disappeared. It is no longer listed in the budget where the health tax revenue goes after the whole sewerage of 2004-05. Now they say they've come up with a new idea, to say it goes into everything under the sun.

Here's the reality. Dalton McGuinty's so-called health tax is punitive, it is regressive, and it hits middle-class families the hardest. It is unaffordable for working families and seniors who have trouble making ends meet in Dalton McGuinty's Ontario.

*Interjection.*

**Mr. Tim Hudak:** It's true, I say to my friend. I would think that as a member of the Ontario Liberal Party, you would prefer progressive means of taxation and you don't like regressive taxes. I'd ask my colleague if he supports, for example, a flat tax. The usual criticism of a flat tax is that it's regressive because higher-income people don't pay as high a proportion of tax as they would under a progressive income tax system. That's the usual argument you would expect to receive.

So, imagine the irony to find out that this income tax increase disguised as a health premium is actually more regressive than the flat tax. Let me explain. A person with a taxable income of \$25,000 has to pay 1.2% of her income for the health tax. A person earning \$72,000 per year pays just over 1% of her income for the health tax. A person earning \$200,000 per year pays 0.45%. And a millionaire—your friend Frank Stronach, who you just gave the \$25-million grant to—

*Interjection.*

**Mr. Tim Hudak:** You've got your own Magna budget now, with that \$25-million grant that Frank Stronach—oh, picture this.

*Interjection.*

**Mr. Tim Hudak:** No. I didn't rank a front-row seat in those days. I had to work hard to get here.

Picture this. This was a time when Magna was considering buying Chrysler. Do you remember this? Magna was considering buying Chrysler, and in your Magna budget, you guys forked over some \$25 million to Magna. We're not even sure what that money has really gone to yet.

So Frank Stronach, for example, would pay only 0.09% of his income into the health tax.

So less than one tenth of a per cent is the rate for the highest incomes, and 1.2% of income for the lowest-income individuals, subject to the Income Tax Act dressed up as a health premium—a highly regressive tax.

I know my colleagues on the government side who are on the finance committee are going to fight this tooth and nail. If they're not going to get rid of the health tax, at the very least they will address the regressive nature of the health tax. Please tell me it's so.

Here's another oldie but a goody in the health tax hall of fame. People in Ontario pay the so-called health tax twice.

*Interjection.*

**Mr. Tim Hudak:** My colleagues say, "What are you talking about?" Let me give you a bit of background. When Dalton McGuinty broke his solemn promise not to raise taxes by introducing the so-called health tax, which is nothing but an income tax increase, he placed an unacceptable burden on lower- and middle-income taxpayers and cost Ontario jobs. If that was not bad enough, the people of Ontario will now be paying for it twice—paying for it twice—through higher transit fees, hydro bills and property—

**Mr. Jean-Marc Lalonde:** Yes, yes. You left us—  
2010

**Mr. Tim Hudak:** I swear you don't listen to my speeches, I say to my friend from Glengarry-Prescott-Russell. I just explained that whole thing. That was your cover story for a short period of time, and you've given up on that one. You have other cover stories now.

But listen to this. When Greg Sorbara, the finance minister, came to your caucus and said, "We're going to bring in our own GST, this health tax increase, this income tax increase," I bet you didn't expect that you would pay it twice. The reality now, four years later, is the cities of Toronto, Ottawa and London are three of 11 public and private sector employers that have lost grievances filed by their unions that will force them to pay for their employees' health premiums. Arbitrators across the province have fielded 55 similar grievances on a case-by-case basis since this tax came into effect in July 2004.

So 11 public and private sector employers, including those in Toronto, Ottawa, London and now Hamilton as well—I represent part of that area now, the upper Stoney Creek and Glanbrook area—have to pay the health tax, which is kind of surprising. The reality was, because Dalton McGuinty did not want to admit that he broke his promise not to raise taxes and raised income taxes, that



he used this title "premium," which got him into all kinds of legal trouble, a big quagmire because of the old OHIP premiums from the 1980s. At issue were clauses dating back to Ontario's old OHIP premiums that forced employers to pay the levy. First introduced in 1972, the OHIP premium was eventually eliminated in 1989. However, many unions insisted on retaining the clause that employers would pay for these premiums in their contracts. It worked for them, right? They made that decision and kept it in the contracts. I don't know if they knew Dalton McGuinty would come along, but here comes Dalton McGuinty, he calls his income tax increase a premium for political purposes to try to sugar-coat it, and these old clauses kicked in. Dalton McGuinty wanted Ontarians to believe that the so-called health tax was not actually a tax increase, so he labelled it the Ontario health premium—a little sugar-coating on the tough medicine.

In his first budget, on May 18, 2004, Dalton McGuinty talked about a premium. The budget document stated in no uncertain terms, "Legislation will be introduced to create the Ontario health premium with every cent dedicated to health and only health." Oh, yeah, that's right, like sewer projects and tourism advertising.

McGuinty was so nervous about the backlash this new tax would generate that he took out radio ads telling Ontarians, "I'm Dalton McGuinty, and I want you to know that every penny of Ontario's new health premium will go to health care." That is, if they kept the radio on loud enough and long enough after hearing Dalton McGuinty's voice, that's the sentence they would have heard. However, as soon as the collective agreement issue popped up, McGuinty began singing a different tune, "Our intention has always been crystal clear"—it's ironic. Does he say this with a straight face? Come on. "Our intention has always been crystal clear, that the Ontario health premium is a tax and not the OHIP premium that had previously been imposed under the Health Insurance Act." First of all, in his radio ad, he's saying it's a health premium and then, when the collective bargaining agreement popped up, McGuinty said, "Well, no, it's actually just a tax."

The Ontario PC Party first asked about this in 2004 and Dalton McGuinty said there was nothing to worry about—the kind of language he uses on the economy, right? "Don't worry; be happy. Nothing to worry about." In October of that year, he said, "If there is some uncertainty connected with this matter and we have to act, then we will do so, to make it perfectly clear that this is something that is to be paid by taxpayers." So he said it was a premium to try to sugar-coat it and sell it to the electorate, even though he wasn't courageous enough to put it before a province-wide referendum like he promised he would. Then he gets caught up in all these collective bargaining agreements because he had called it a premium when in fact it was an income tax increase, so he starts backpedalling and says, "Well, it's really a tax, not a premium." Then he says, in answer to a question in the Legislature—asked by Mr. Runciman, if I recall—

that he would act to make it clearer that it is a tax and not a premium.

But now, four years later, Dalton McGuinty has still yet to act to bring in that clarification legislation. Maybe that's what this review is about. Maybe that will be part of the review process, that he will clarify exactly what he means.

For example, taxpayers in the city of Ottawa—the OC Transpo contract meant that taxpayers in Ottawa are on the hook for an extra \$1.5 million a year and \$4.5 million retroactively. If you're working in a restaurant in Ottawa, if you're working in a car dealership in Ottawa, you pay your Ontario health tax—courtesy of Dalton McGuinty, that income tax increase—and on top of that, now you have to pay what was then \$6 million in back pay because Dalton McGuinty tried to gussy this up as some kind of premium.

In the city of Toronto, the decision for the TTC will cost the public agency approximately \$18 million in back pay and \$6 million per year into the future. So if you're working in the city of Toronto, working in a retail outlet by way of example, you're paying the health tax out of your own pocket, plus you're paying for the collective bargaining agreements because Dalton McGuinty tried to say this was a health premium, rather than being gutsy enough to say that it was actually a tax increase.

Ontario Power Generation, London Hydro, Norfolk Power Distribution, all lost their appeals and are picking up the tabs. The costs pass on to users in those systems.

LaPointe-Fisher nursing home, the city of Hamilton for the firefighters' association, National Steel Car, among others, were impacted by the way this health tax was sold.

In my last comments in the last minute I have available, unless there is unanimous consent for me to continue—

#### *Interjections.*

**Mr. Tim Hudak:** The tire tax fee—déjà vu, here we go all over again. Before the last election, Dalton McGuinty said that he would not bring in this tire tax, and he said, "Do you hear me? Are we all clear?"

The election happened, and then we had another conversion on the road to tax Damascus. Dalton McGuinty said, "I'm going to charge a tax anyway," and a provincial budget that they've boasted was going to be tax-hike-free was followed three days later by the announcement of the brand spanking new tire tax fee: \$4 to \$6.

Then, a couple of days later, other electronics are going to be taxed as well, so I'm sad to say that while they were boasting about a tax-free budget, it still contained this old income tax increase and brand new taxes several days later.

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier):** Before we proceed, I have been advised that in the Kraft Hockeyville competition, the winner has been determined.

I'm further advised that two names come up on the screen of communities: Roberval, Quebec and Kingsville, Ontario. But I am sad to advise that Roberval,



Quebec, was the winner. I want to thank everyone who supported Kingsville in this competition.

Further debate?

**Ms. Cheri DiNovo:** I am so sorry about the results. Please, take our condolences from the New Democratic Party of Ontario.

I was most pleased, as always, to hear my eloquent friend from Niagara West—Glanbrook and his hour-long dissertation on the tax that isn't; as he said so eloquently, the GST—the Greg Sorbara Tax. It really did raise for me that wonderful day when Greg Sorbara was the finance minister and stood up in this House to announce the so-called new child tax benefit—a tax benefit that would amount to \$250 for the poorest children in Ontario—while wearing shoes that were worth \$256 and while clawing back about \$1,200 from the federal national child supplement. So a fond memory.

Another fond memory that he brought to mind as well, was, of course, the infamous one now of the Premier of Ontario signing his name and saying, "There will be no new taxes." I appreciate that. It's always good to walk down memory lane and to remember promises broken. Of course, there were many of them. I think we lost count at about 26.

2020

There's no question that the Liberal Party of Ontario is a party of Bay Street and not Main Street. If there's anything that shows that, it's this health tax. Again, as we've heard, this is not a progressive tax; this is one of the most regressive taxes. A couple of examples: First of all, a bank teller making \$26,000 a year pays 1.2% of his taxable income in health tax, while a lawyer making \$150,000 a year pays only 0.5% of her income. Another one is that an auto worker making \$45,000 pays 1% of her income in health tax, while a CEO—many of them friends of our friends opposite—making \$500,000 pays only 0.2% of his income. I will go on with other examples of how regressive this regressive tax is.

I also point out again, somewhat redundantly after my friend from Niagara West—Glanbrook, that I hope the required committee process to look at this bill is going to be a genuine one. I hope that deputants from across the province come and say exactly what their experience with the so-called health tax is, how regressive it is, and have a chance to speak about—and this is the central point—whether this health tax has made Ontarians healthier.

Of course, our contention in the New Democratic Party is that it has not, that Ontarians are not healthier under the McGuinty Liberals than they were before this health tax was imposed, or before there were McGuinty Liberals in power. I want to point out a few aspects of the health of Ontarians under this new imposed health tax.

First of all, we heard from Campaign 2000 that one in eight children live in poverty. We all know that you cannot live in poverty and be healthy—not as healthy as you could be. For example, this government says they're going to bring in \$1 extra per week for poor children in

their budget. That is not going to keep that one in eight children healthy.

I point out that this is also a government that is closing the pools across the city of Toronto. I've lost track of the number of e-mails I get from parents who are concerned about obesity rates, about the health of their children. Yet somehow, this government continues along to close those pools when keeping them open would cost a mere \$12 million or so; again, something that they could really do that would help poor children.

But back to the health tax and more stinging examples. An accounting clerk making \$30,000 a year pays a shocking 24% more in income tax, while an insurance executive making \$200,000 pays only 3% more. A restaurant manager making \$50,000 a year is paying 16% more in provincial income tax, while a bank executive making \$200,000 pays only 3% more. Finally, an average working couple with two \$50,000 earners pays \$1,200 more in provincial income tax, so it's certainly a regressive tax; there's nothing progressive about this. One would expect the higher-income earners, with a progressive tax, would pay more, not less—in fact, they pay more under this tax, again, a tax that was never supposed to be, because the Premier of this province, Dalton McGuinty, promised that he would not raise taxes.

Let's look at the dental health of Ontarians. Are they healthier with this health tax under the McGuinty Liberals? Certainly not. My husband and I had the wonderful opportunity to go to Sweden just after Christmas. It's really interesting that you can see in Sweden—it's not alone—and other Scandinavian and European countries vibrant economies. They're not losing jobs by the hundreds of thousands over there. We know them for having Sony Ericsson, Volvo, and H&M—for having many other companies, of course. And they're nine million strong. There are only nine million people in Sweden, far less than we have in Ontario. We have about 13 million people. For some reason, they can afford to have cradle-to-grave social services. For some reason, they can afford to have free dental up to the age of 18. But no, not here; not in Ontario, not with this regressive health tax.

Here we see children get, according to this last budget, \$90 only for the poorest children, \$90 extra a year. Anyone who has been to a dentist recently—I know many who are watching have taken their children to the dentist, those who can still afford to—you'll know what \$90 a year buys. It buys an extraction, and it's going to have to buy an extraction, because there's certainly not enough money in this dental plan, as put forward by the McGuinty Liberals, to pay for dental health—not real dental health. That's preventive dental health. That's going in for cleanings and checkups. That's not here. So dental health is not particularly healthy, particularly for the poorest in McGuinty's Ontario, under this health tax.

Of course, as New Democrats—the party of Tommy Douglas, after all; the party of medicare; the party that stands for universal, accessible health care for everyone; the New Democrats who always stood for this—we knew



that this would be an ongoing fight. Tommy used to say that you could never rest with universal health care. It always has to be extended and it always has to be guarded.

We don't see it guarded here. We see an increase of public privately built hospitals. We see an increase—and this is shocking, actually, quite shocking—an increase of hospitals that are going to be running deficits; over 60% of them. We know they're not supposed to, but yet, on the front page of the *Toronto Star* today, we see that they are letting go of nurses. This was supposed to be the government that was supposed to be hiring nurses. What could possibly be going wrong here? Obviously, this government is not fully funding health care, despite the imposition of this extremely regressive health tax.

We in the New Democratic Party have always called for fully funded health care, nothing less. This tax does not provide this. This tax just provides an added burden on the poorest among us.

Another aspect of health care, a major aspect of health care, is the health care of families. I find it phenomenally ironic that as we sit in this chamber, there is a function going on downstairs for Equal Voice. Equal Voice wants to see more women in this Legislature. Certainly, the honourable member from Nepean—Carleton has called for family friendly legislative hours. We heard vague murmurings from across the aisle of no more night sittings. Why do we always and consistently vote against night sittings? Because they're not family friendly. Because for women who have to look after small children, this is not conducive to a political career. Because women who have to look after small children need to be able to go home at night or they will not see their children.

So of course, this is an anti-woman move, an anti-family-health move and an anti-family friendly move. Ironically, here we sit enabling this, while Equal Voice downstairs calls for more women in politics. We're not going to see more women in politics if we continue with the kind of hours that the McGuinty Liberals call us to put in here.

What about seniors? Has the health tax made Ontario's seniors healthier? One might just walk into any long-term-care facility and ask a senior there or their family and you'll get a pretty straightforward answer from most of them. I know I do in my constituency, and I've heard from them across the province.

Before this life, as members know, I was a United Church minister—and by the way, a friendly amendment to my friend from Niagara West—Glanbrook: It's "loaves and fishes," not "bread and loaves."

**Mr. Tim Hudak:** Oh, is that what I said?

2030

**Ms. Cheri DiNovo:** It's okay. It's good. A friendly amendment to your speech: loaves and fishes.

So if you walk into long-term care, what do you find? You find overworked, harried staff. You find administrators trying to penny-pinch at every turn. You find them still struggling under this meagre per-client hour of care problem that, again, the McGuinty Liberals promised to address and have not. In fact, this new budget brings in—

what?—five or six minutes extra of care a day—obviously not enough, obviously not adequate, obviously not what our seniors need and deserve. These are the ones who, after all, have paved the way for all of us here.

Are our seniors healthier with the McGuinty health tax? No, our seniors are not healthier with the McGuinty health tax.

My colleague from Nickel Belt will talk about community health centres. She knows about them better than anyone else in this Legislature, and she'll talk about the fact that almost every year they come with hat in hand, asking, begging, for more money from this government, and never receive enough.

Let's go back to why the health tax is more regressive than one would like. In fact, it's even more regressive than the pre-1989 premium. Under the previous premium regime, almost 70% of premiums were paid for by employers. Not any more. We know that this lent an air of fairness to an otherwise, what we would have considered, still regressive flat premium. By implementing the health tax as a surtax on personal income tax, the government has made it next to impossible for an employer to pay the premium, even if they wanted to do the right thing and help out the lower-income earners who are working for them. Even if they wanted to, it's almost impossible to do that.

In the 2007 campaign, the NDP proposed a change to the health tax that would put money back in the pockets of 75% of working families by providing a health tax rebate of up to \$450 per person and \$900 per two-income family. So you see, this government does in fact have a choice. It could exclude low- and moderate-income Ontarians from paying this tax at all, if they wanted to. They're a majority government. They can do what they want. Why don't they want to help out middle- and lower-income Ontarians? Why do they insist on being a party of Bay Street and not a party of Main Street?

We also proposed to phase in the elimination of this health tax for 1.5 million workers earning under \$48,000, and that would put \$450 back into the pockets of individuals earning between \$48,000 and \$80,000—middle-income earners, hard-working people who are trying to get by, who thought that they had been promised that their taxes would not be raised and, in fact, found that their taxes have been raised. We think that's unfair. We think they deserve a rebate.

The NDP plan is a balanced approach that I think might accomplish some of the aims of this government—at least, purported aims—that only puts money in the pockets of lower- and moderate-income Ontarians who need it the most—that's what we're purporting—while protecting health services by ensuring that banks, insurance companies and the well-off pay their fair share. Of course, when we really look at the friends of this government—again, the friends on Bay Street—we see heading the list those selfsame banks and insurance companies and the well-off.

Just to conclude—I'm going to be sharing my time, as I've said, with my colleague from Nickel Belt, our emi-



ment and able health critic—for those who are listening at home, when you think about this health tax, a health tax that goes against the promise of the Premier of Ontario, who promised he would not raise taxes more than once; he signed his name to it, in fact—it is a health tax that is completely and utterly regressive, that hits the poorest and the middle-income earners the most and hits those who could most afford it the least. Surely this government, who pretend that they want to do something about poverty, will at least do the right thing and really look at this health tax, really get deputants, really commit to reviewing this health tax—which we suspect, we fear, is not actually the case.

Again, has the health tax made Ontarians healthier? The answer from Ontarians across this province, the answer from the New Democratic Party, is a resounding, absolute no.

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier):** We'll have to ask for consent because you yielded the floor and didn't tell us that you were sharing your time.

**Ms. Cheri DiNovo:** I did.

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier):** You did? I'm sorry. There were a couple of ears up here that didn't hear that. Let's continue. The member for Nickel Belt.

**M<sup>me</sup> France Gélinas:** We're here to talk about the Ontario health premium, but let's call it by its real name: the health tax of the McGuinty government. That was, in 2003, a promise that we all know was not kept. That was the first of a long series of broken promises. There were to be no tax increases in Ontario. They campaigned on a promise of no new taxes in Ontario, yet we got this Ontario health premium.

Not only is it a new tax; to add insult to injury, the tax is grossly unfair. I'll give you some examples. If you make \$30,000 a year of taxable income, your income tax has gone up by 24%. If you make \$50,000 a year, then your income tax has gone up by 16%. But if you're one of the wealthy ones and have made \$200,000, then this tax only represents a 3% increase in your income tax. This is the reverse pyramid that doesn't make any sense. We are actually punishing low-income earners by taxing them more. The system is supposed to work the other way. It's supposed to be that as you make more money, you are in a position to pay more taxes. But with the McGuinty government, they have it all in reverse: The less money you make, the more we will punish you with that health tax that was not supposed to be there at all.

What are we talking about in real terms? We're talking about a lot of money. We're talking about a couple who makes \$50,000 a year who will pay \$1,200 more in income tax. This is a huge amount for anybody.

They would have us believe that because we have this health tax, our health care system is doing so much better. They would have us believe that it has reduced the number of people who haven't got access to a family physician. Well, in 2003, before the tax was introduced, over 100,000 people in Ontario did not have access to primary care, did not have access to a family physician. Fast forward to right now, to 2008: There are 100,000

Ontarians who don't have access to primary care, who don't have a family physician.

**2040**

Quand la taxe nous a été présentée, tout le monde pensait que, bon, on aurait plus d'argent, on verrait un impact positif sur notre système de santé. La première chose que les gens regardaient, c'est, « Est-ce que je vais finalement avoir accès à un médecin de famille? » En 2003, quand la nouvelle taxe était mise en place, il y avait plus de 100 000 personnes en Ontario qui n'avaient pas d'accès aux soins primaires. C'est-à-dire, ils n'avaient ni accès à une infirmière praticienne, ni accès à un médecin de famille. On est rendu en avril 2008, et on a encore 100 000 personnes en Ontario qui n'ont pas d'accès aux soins primaires, qui n'ont pas de médecin de famille et qui n'ont pas d'accès à une infirmière praticienne non plus.

Pour ces gens-là, s'ils tombent malades, ça veut dire des longues lignes d'attente à l'urgence, ça veut dire des cliniques sans rendez-vous, mais surtout, ça veut dire qu'il n'y a aucun investissement de fait pour garder les gens en santé. On parle de promotion de la santé, de prévention de la maladie. Bien. L'accès aux soins primaires, c'est le premier pas, c'est un pas important pour garder les gens en santé.

They would have us believe that because we pay this regressive health tax, we now have access to more nurses, who are, as we all agree, at the heart of the health care system. They are telling us that they will invest in 9,000 new nurses within the next mandate. We have some bad news here. Anybody who read the headlines—hospitals have to balance their books, and they're doing it by letting nurses go, to the tune of—today, 72 full-time nursing positions will be taken out of Rouge Valley. That means that the nurses everybody cherishes, the nurses who are at the core of our health care system, are losing their jobs. We're not talking about adding here; we're talking about losing nurses.

Quand on parle de la taxe, on nous dit que ça va aider le système de santé. On nous dit qu'on va s'en servir pour financer plus de postes d'infirmière dans le système de santé de l'Ontario. Ils ont même chiffré ça à 9 000 nouveaux postes d'infirmière dans le prochain mandat. Moi, je leur dirais que ça commence pas mal mal. Pour tout le monde qui sont capables de lire les journaux, on a vu que l'hôpital de Rouge Valley a annoncé que 72 postes à temps plein d'infirmière devront être coupés afin qu'ils puissent balancer leur budget. On ne parle plus d'en ajouter; on parle de couper des postes. Les infirmières, c'est la seule profession qui est là 24/7, au chevet du client tout le temps. C'est une profession que les gens respectent. On a besoin de plus d'infirmières en Ontario, mais la situation est telle dans notre système de santé qu'on ne voit pas le nombre augmenter. Les postes sont en train d'être coupés.

On nous parle également des équipes santé familiale. Les équipes santé familiale, c'est le modèle du gouvernement McGuinty pour régler les problèmes d'accès dans les soins primaires. On a annoncé avec grande fanfare et



tout ça au moins 150 nouvelles équipes. Mais quand tu regardes un petit peu plus loin, tu te rends compte que ce n'est pas 150 nouvelles équipes parce que la plupart de ces équipes-là, c'étaient des groupes et des réseaux de soins primaires qui existaient déjà. On leur a donné un nouveau nom, une nouvelle formule de financement à la McGuinty, puis on nous a dit, « Voilà, on vient de créer 150 nouvelles équipes. » La réalité est très loin de ça.

They would have us believe that because we pay this health tax, Ontarians now have better access to primary care; they now have access to 150 new family health teams that work under an interdisciplinary team, and that will be the legacy of this government to improved access to primary care. Well, let's look at what the 150 family health teams are all about. Most of them are a rebranding of existing primary health care teams. They used to call them family health networks. Some of you were probably signed up in family health networks, and now nothing has changed but you're in a family health team. You were maybe served by a family health group. Well, nothing has changed, but you're now in a family health team. Those 150 new family health teams? Allow me to be a little bit disappointed here, because we're not talking new; we're talking repackaging of existing primary health care services that were there before and are now being called new. A few are new. There's one in my riding, City of Lakes family health team, that is actually under construction. It's a new one, but most of them were existing teams that got rebranded.

I want to talk about community health centres a bit. The community health centres have been in existence since the 1970s. They have been studied to death and proven to be the most effective way to provide primary care to a given community, yet after all these years, after 36 years of being looked at and analyzed, Ontario still hasn't got a province-wide network of community health centres.

Community health centres are community-governed, linked to their names. That means they have a board directors, volunteers, who we often say are the eyes, ears and conscience of the community. They are the link to the community, and they sit on the board and give the governance of the community health centre. The community health centre has a small team of people who do administrative work, and then they have their team of primary care providers. Every community health centre has physicians. Most of them have nurse practitioners, nurses, dietitians, social workers etc. That's their primary care team.

They also have health promotion teams, which look at things like the healthy baby clinics, smoking cessation and increased exercise. What makes the community health centre different is that they also have a community development team, and this is where work really takes place, work based on the determinants of health to make the people of Ontario healthier.

So, rather than expand the network of community health centres, the McGuinty government decided to rebrand it to family health teams. None of them have com-

munity development workers, none of them have health promotion workers, and most of those family health teams are a rebranding of existing networks.

J'aimerais parler un petit peu du besoin d'expansion des centres de santé communautaire en Ontario. Les centres de santé communautaire, de par leur nom, sont dirigés par un conseil d'administration. On dit souvent de ces bénévoles qui siègent au conseil d'administration qu'ils sont les yeux, les oreilles et la conscience de notre communauté. Ils sont le lien au conseil d'administration du centre de santé pour donner la gouvernance, les directions stratégiques etc. De ça, il y a une petite équipe de gestion, mais il y a également trois grands programmes dans tous les centres de santé.

Le premier, c'est le programme des soins primaires. Dans le programme des soins primaires on retrouve médecins, infirmières praticiennes, infirmières, nutritionnistes, diététistes, travailleuses sociales etc., basés sur les besoins de la clientèle qui est desservie par le centre. Ceci est l'équipe des soins primaires.

On y retrouve également une équipe de promotion de la santé. Ce sont des gens qui vont étudier les besoins de santé de la population et qui vont mettre en place des programmes de promotion de la santé et de prévention de la maladie. On y retrouve des sessions pour aider les gens à cesser de fumer, les aider à perdre du poids, les éduquer sur les maladies chroniques comme le diabète etc.

Mais la troisième équipe est l'équipe que l'on retrouve seulement dans les centres de santé communautaire, l'équipe de développement communautaire. Dans cette équipe, on retrouve des gens qui travaillent au niveau des déterminants de la santé pour garder la population desservie en santé. C'est là vraiment que les centres de santé communautaire se distinguent et qu'ils font tellement une grosse différence dans la vie des communautés là où ils sont installés. Il y en a présentement 54 et on en aura bientôt 76. C'était très bien, mais on n'a toujours pas un réseau à l'intérieur de l'Ontario qui permettrait de couvrir toutes les régions géographiques de l'Ontario. On les retrouve un petit peu ici et là.

Pour la région du grand Toronto, ils sont chanceux et la distribution est quasi adéquate. Mais aussitôt que tu vas un petit peu au nord, dans ma région, dans le nord de l'Ontario, il y en a un à Sudbury, un au Témiscamingue, un à Thunder Bay et un à Timmins. Il reste beaucoup de territoire dans le nord qui n'est pas couvert où il y a des gens qui n'ont aucun accès aux centres de santé communautaire. Pourtant, plusieurs de ces communautés-là ont des demandes de financement et que, on aurait pensé avec les nouveaux revenus de la taxe sur la santé, ça leur aurait été permis de financer. Mais non, on ne voit rien de cela. Dans la communauté de Elliot Lake, qui a une demande de financement depuis des années, dans la communauté de Copper Cliff, ça fait près de 10 ans qu'elles attendent pour avoir leur propre centre de santé communautaire. Ces centres-là ne se font pas financer et les gens continuent d'avoir des grands problèmes d'accès.



2050

Une autre chose importante à retenir face aux centres de santé communautaire : lorsque, pour une raison ou pour une autre, on est dans une région insuffisamment desservie, comme la région d'où je viens dans le nord-est de l'Ontario, souvent on a des pénuries de main-d'œuvre; les communautés ont de la misère à recruter des médecins. Avec un centre de santé communautaire, même si le médecin s'en va pour une période de temps, le centre reste là. Ton dossier médical reste là. Le restant de l'équipe est toujours sur place, ce qui aide les petites communautés, surtout du nord et rurales, à continuer d'offrir un certain niveau d'accès aux soins primaires pendant que l'on met les efforts de recrutement en place.

Avec les équipes de santé familiale, si le médecin s'en va, l'équipe part avec et il ne reste rien. Les centres de santé communautaire sont un modèle beaucoup mieux adapté pour répondre aux besoins des communautés rurales et du nord. Mais est-ce que la taxe santé a servi à en financer plus? Non, pas du tout.

My colleague mentioned an increase to the northern health travel grant. Of course, coming from the riding of Nickel Belt, a lot of my constituents use this program. The low increase to their budget was welcome, but it still falls way short of making sure that the people living in northern Ontario have the same level of access to tertiary and secondary care in the bigger centres as the people who live in southern Ontario. Did you know that the northern health travel grant gives you a whopping \$100 to pay for your hotel room? Well, if you are from Nickel Belt and don't know your way around Toronto, trying to find a hotel room for you and your family while you have an appointment in a Toronto hospital is impossible. That means that if you're from a low-income family, if you're—God forbid—unemployed or on Ontario Works, you will have to subsidize that hotel room with money you don't have. It's the same thing with the mileage rate; it's really low. It makes it really difficult for people on a low income or fixed income to go to appointments in southern Ontario for services that are not available to northern Ontario.

This program needs to be looked at to better reflect the real costs to people who live in northern Ontario to access services that are not available in the north and are available in southern Ontario only. A hundred dollars a night for a hotel room does not cut it; it doesn't matter where you try to stay and what kind of a deal you try to make.

On parle du programme d'accès pour les gens du nord. Bien, ce programme rembourse les gens du nord 100 \$ pour les frais d'hôtel. Cent dollars pour les frais d'hôtel suffirait peut-être dans le nord de l'Ontario, mais ce n'est pas dans le nord que l'on en a besoin; c'est à Toronto. Se trouver un hôtel qui va nous coûter moins de 100 \$ par nuit est impossible à Toronto. Donc, si tu es d'une famille de travailleurs à petit salaire ou si tu es bénéficiaire d'Ontario au travail ou d'un plan d'invalidité, bien, bonne chance. Cela veut dire que tu devras toi-même

payer une partie des frais d'hôtel, et cela est souvent impossible.

L'autre chose, c'est qu'on ne t'offre pas cet argent-là à l'avance. Tu dois remplir un paquet de papiers, ton médecin doit signer ça, le médecin de Toronto et cetera doit signer ça, puis après cela tu attends. Tu attends et tu attends ton chèque, puis quand tu es bien tanné d'attendre, et tu es venu voir ta députée une couple de fois, tu attends encore six semaines puis tu vas recevoir ton remboursement, si tous les papiers ont été remplis comme il faut. Cela met les familles de petits salariés et les familles d'Ontario au travail dans une position où elles ne peuvent pas bénéficier de ce programme.

On parle également de donner des licences aux médecins qui viennent de l'extérieur. Dans mon comté, j'ai justement une dame, une médecin, qui a pratiqué pendant plusieurs années en Russie, qui parle très bien l'anglais, qui est installée dans mon comté qui est sous-desservie des services depuis toujours. Il y a plein de petites communautés; j'ai 23 petites communautés dans mon comté. Les 23 petites communautés sont insuffisamment desservies. Elles sont presque toutes prêtes à lui offrir un poste, mais ça va prendre un autre deux ans avant qu'elles puissent avoir une licence pour pratiquer en Ontario. C'est un peu long pour des gens qui attendent, puis je ne dirais pas que c'est un des grands succès.

The new health premium was also supposed to help alleviate access to primary care by making it easier for IMGs, internationally trained medical graduates, to practise in Ontario. I was given the example of this lady in my riding who comes from Russia and is now a resident of Nickel Belt. She worked as a family physician in Russia for many years and is very qualified. She speaks English beautifully. She has embarked on this process of having her qualifications recognized by the government of Ontario. Well, going full speed ahead, it's going to take two years before she gets recognized. Those are two years where she won't have practised as a family physician and two years during which the 23 communities that make up Nickel Belt won't have access to her services, when each and every one of those communities is underserved and has been underserved for so many years.

We're also led to believe that if we pay this health premium, we will have more money for long-term care. Long-term care is made up of homes for the aged and nursing homes. This is basically a place where people go who need 24/7 supervision and care. Most people are elderly when they go to long-term care. They need hands-on care.

The health premium was supposed to help pay for more health services. Right now, the level of hands-on care in long-term-care facilities stands at 2.45 hours. Just work through the math in your mind a little bit. You get up in the morning and you need somebody to help you get out of bed, get out of your pyjamas and into your day clothes, and then you need somebody to help feed you your breakfast. We won't even talk about a mid-morning



snack at this point. You'll also need maybe another 10 or 15 minutes for somebody to help you go to the bathroom and wash up, maybe brush your hair and brush your teeth, and then maybe another 20 minutes or half-hour at lunchtime so that you can have somebody help you prepare your tray and help you feed yourself. Then you may have to go to the bathroom after lunch, so that's another 15 or 20 minutes. Then supper comes, and then there's the routine of going back to bed, and 2.45 hours doesn't add up anymore. You have workers in there, most of them women, most of them PSWs, who work so hard because their heart is there and they want to provide the best possible care to their residents but they just can't make it.

We've talked a lot about incontinence. A lot of residents have incontinence issues, which means that with proper incontinence management, if you bring them to the bathroom regularly, there's a good chance that the incontinence issues will be in check. But if you haven't got the staff to do this, then it all falls apart, and your dignity as a person goes out the window with it.

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On nous aurait fait croire que, avec la nouvelle taxe de santé, on aurait plus d'argent pour nos aînés qui sont dans des maisons de soins infirmiers; ce n'est pas le cas. En ce moment, on parle d'environ 2,45 heures de soins par résidant. Quand tu dis 2,45, c'est quand même assez bien. Mais quand tu passes une journée avec un résidant dans une maison de soins infirmiers, tu te rends compte qu'il y a beaucoup de soins et que ça prend du temps. On parle de la routine du matin : l'aider à se lever, à enlever ses pyjamas, à se brosser les dents et les cheveux, à se préparer pour la journée, aller à la toilette en se levant le matin, déjeuner, peut-être un snack dans l'avant-midi. C'est la même chose sur l'heure du dîner : préparer ton cabaret, t'aider à manger ton dîner, sans doute retourner à la toilette après l'heure du dîner. On parle également de la même routine qui se passe pour le souper : quelqu'un pour t'aider, quelqu'un pour ouvrir ton cabaret, le préparer, mais également quelqu'un pour t'aider à t'alimenter, puis peut-être une autre collation le soir, et après ça, te préparer pour le dodo. Mais tout ça ne se fait pas dans 2,45 heures.

On parle beaucoup d'incontinence. Dernièrement cela a fait les manchettes des journaux avec toutes sortes de « jokes » déplaisantes que je ne répéterai pas. Mais ce dont on a vraiment besoin si, en vieillissant, la personne commence à avoir des problèmes d'incontinence, c'est qu'on a souvent besoin d'amener la personne à la toilette plus souvent. Mais ça va dire qu'il faut quelqu'un pour t'aider. Si tu n'avais pas besoin d'aide, tu ne serais pas dans un foyer de soins de longue durée, tu ne serais pas dans une maison de soins de longue durée; tu serais chez toi. Donc, ces gens-là ont besoin d'aide, mais les femmes—parce que ce sont surtout des femmes qui travaillent là—n'en viennent pas à bout. Il y a tellement de choses à faire qu'ils vont au minimum—ils vont au maximum de leur capacité mais cela ne remplit pas le minimum des soins.

Toutes les familles ont écrit au ministère de la Santé, ont envoyé des pétitions pour leur dire, « On veut plus d'heures de soins et on a eu un gros six minutes de plus. Quelle déception. »

We would also be led to believe that this new health premium will help us pay for more home care. Home care is the type of care that people require to stay in their homes. I have been in the health care business for over 25 years and have yet to meet an elderly person who said, "Really, I don't want to be treated at home. I'd like to go to a long-term-care bed."

They want to stay home, surrounded by the people they know, surrounded by the things that they know and in charge of their own lives. But in order to do this, as people grow older and sometime frailer, they need a little bit of support.

This system of home care has been in shambles, has been doing really poorly since we introduced competitive bidding. Competitive bidding was supposed to bring the costs down; it did not do that. Sure, the for-profit corporation bid really low the first year to make sure that they'd underbid most of the not-for-profits that were offering quality home care services.

So the first contract looked pretty good. We seemed to be saving a lot of money. But that was the first contract. As soon as the second contract came about, we saw increases to the tune of 48% for the same level of care. Did the workers' wages go up 48%? I'll let you guess on that one. Not at all. Wages for those people—here again, mostly women—have continuously gone down, not up, their working conditions have deteriorated and they have no benefits. This is what competitive bidding has brought in.

Every three years you don't know whether you're going to have a job if you're a health care worker. If your company loses the contract and it goes to the other private for-profit company, then you get to reapply. Will they rehire you? Some of them get a job with the new one. Who would like to reapply for their job every three years? Who would like to start back at zero every three years, with no benefits? Chances are that you're doing the same work with the same client load, but for lower pay, less benefits and less mileage.

What kind of a system is that? If you don't treat your employees well, no wonder we have such a hard time recruiting people to work in that system. The new grads will go in, find the work is way too hard, and apply for anything else. As soon as they can get a job someplace else, they leave the home care system.

Is this the type of care we want to provide to the people who are aging at home, the people who need that little bit of support in order to stay in their homes? I don't think so, but this is what this lovely health premium helped us pay for. It helped us pay for a lower standard of care and lower working conditions. What a lose-lose situation.

La taxe sur la santé était supposée financer des programmes de santé, tels les soins à domicile. Les soins à domicile, c'est le type de soins qui aident les personnes à



demeurer chez elles pendant qu'elles vieillissent et qu'elles deviennent de plus en plus frêles. Moi, ça fait 25 ans que je travaille dans le système de santé, et dans toutes mes années de carrière, je n'ai jamais vu une seule personne âgée me dire, « Moi, vraiment, j'aimerais mieux aller au Manoir ou dans un lit de soins de longue durée que de rester chez nous. » Tout le monde veut rester chez eux. Ils veulent rester entourés des gens qu'ils connaissent, ils veulent rester entourés des choses qu'ils connaissent, et continuer d'être en charge de leur vie. Quand tu deviens plus âgé et plus frêle, des fois tu as besoin d'un petit peu d'aide pour faire ça. Puis c'est là que tu as besoin du système de soins à domicile.

Mais le système de soins à domicile a été viré sur la tête quand on a décidé d'avoir des compétitions. Les compétitions entre les agences qui offrent des soins à domicile, qui offrent n'importe quelles sortes de soins, ça ne marche pas. Quand tu est là pour offrir des soins, tu devrais travailler ensemble, en collaboration, pas travailler l'un contre l'autre. En travaillant l'un contre l'autre, en ces compétitions-là, la première année, les compagnies à profit ont mis des offres très basses, et plusieurs d'entre elles ont gagné de gros contrats, ce qui voudrait dire que les organismes à but non lucratif ont perdu des contrats, ont fermé. Dans ma communauté de Sudbury, une agence comme VON, qui était là depuis des années, qui était respectée par tout le monde, qui offrait des soins de « nursing » de très haute qualité, a perdu son contrat. Non seulement ont-ils perdu le contrat, ils ont dû déclarer faillite, pour que les compagnies à profit puissent avoir le contrat.

Bon, ça va avoir l'air beau. La première année, on était capable de couper les gages des travailleurs. On était capable, apparemment, de sauver de l'argent. Mais trois ans plus tard, c'était le temps d'un autre contrat, et là, pour offrir exactement les mêmes services par les mêmes travailleurs, ils demandaient 48 % de plus. Il n'y avait plus d'économies à faire là. Les économies, c'était fini. Les économies, c'était pour gagner le contrat. Une fois qu'ils avaient le contrat, puis que les agences à but non lucratif avaient dû déclarer faillite, qu'ils ne pouvaient plus eux-mêmes compétitionner, là, les prix ont commencé à augmenter. Quarante-huit pour cent, c'est une grosse augmentation.

Est-ce que vous pensez que les travailleurs dans le domaine des soins à domicile en ont profité, de ce 48 % d'augmentation? Pas une miette. Les salaires dans les soins à domicile continuent de dégringoler et de diminuer d'une année à l'autre. Les conditions de travail s'empirent d'une année à l'autre, et le remboursement du kilométrage empire d'une année à l'autre.

On a un système, et à tous les trois ans on prend ce système-là, on le vire en envers complètement, on dit à tous les employés, « Vous venez de perdre votre job. Vous allez devoir demander et appliquer pour votre même job avec les mêmes patients, avec une autre compagnie qui va vous payer moins cher, qui ne vous offrira pas d'avantages sociaux, puis on va vous donner moins de cents le kilomètre. » Quelle sorte de système

est-ce qu'on a là? Est-ce que c'est vraiment le système que l'on veut pour les gens qui ont besoin des soins à domicile? Moi, je ne pense pas. Mais c'est ce qu'on est en train de leur offrir.

Ça fait que les gens qui offrent des soins à domicile ont beaucoup, beaucoup de difficultés à recruter. Ils ont beaucoup de difficultés à recruter parce que la plupart des gens qui travaillent dans le système de soins à domicile, aussitôt qu'ils peuvent se trouver une job ailleurs, ils le font, parce que la job ailleurs va payer mieux, elle va avoir des avantages sociaux, puis on va te donner un petit peu de respect. Le système de compétition n'offre rien de ça. Il faut s'en débarrasser, et au plus vite. Si la taxe santé ne servait qu'à faire ça, les néo-démocrates l'appuieraient.

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The budget also provided monies for hospices. Hospices offer end-of-life care in a very dignified way, and there are a number of them under way right now. One in my community, Maison la Paix, is presently building a new hospice. Maison la Paix has put in a lot of effort to mount a really aggressive fundraising campaign, and they were very successful to date and were able to raise a lot of money. What did that mean? That meant the McGuinty government gave them only half a million dollars for the hospice. Go to any other communities—maybe North Bay, maybe Sault Ste. Marie—that are also in the north that did not put the effort into fundraising that Sudbury did and you'll see that they got \$2 million and \$1.5 million. So how does the McGuinty government thank the community that has really supported their hospice? They give them less money.

My hospice in Sudbury will do well because it has a group of good people who work really hard, but it won't be thanks to the health premium and it won't be thanks to this government, which didn't see fit to give them an amount of money proportionate to the number of beds that were allocated to them.

J'aimerais vous parler des soins des hospices. On parle de soins palliatifs; on parle d'une maison où les gens qui sont palliatifs peuvent aller vivre leurs dernières journées. À Sudbury, nous avons un tel hospice qui s'appelle Maison la Paix, qui est présentement en construction. Maison la Paix a mis beaucoup d'effort pour faire une levée de fonds qui jusqu'à date a eu beaucoup de succès. Mais qu'est-ce qui leur est arrivé? Quand les fonds sont venus pour payer pour les services d'hospice, pour être à Sudbury, ils ont reçu un demi-million. Moi, j'ai regardé ça et je me suis dit, « Bon, mais c'est pas pire ». Mais là, tu commences à regarder ailleurs puis là tu vois bien que l'hospice à North Bay et celui de Sault Ste Marie ont reçu des montants beaucoup plus gros. Est-ce que c'est parce qu'ils sont beaucoup plus gros? Non, pas du tout. C'est qu'eux n'avaient pas fait autant d'effort pour faire une levée de fonds. Ça veut dire que lorsque les communautés se sont engagées pour soutenir leur hospice, le gouvernement McGuinty les a punis en leur donnant moins d'argent. Ça, ce n'est pas très encourageant pour personne. Ça ne montre pas non



plus des qualités de leadership, où tu encourages et tu finances les services de façon proportionnelle au nombre de lits dans chacun d'eux.

I'd like to talk about the wait time strategy. This is one of the pillars of the health care system, something that gets lots of coverage in all the media that seems to be so good. Apparently this health tax is going to help us to fund some of this wait time strategy.

First of all, the wait time strategy only applies to a few procedures. We've named some of them: cataract surgery, hip and knee replacement etc. Some of those procedures have decreased the amount of wait time, but there's a price to pay for this. The price to pay is that if you are not a standard case—if you have a language issue because you're a new immigrant, if you have mental health issues and we may need to spend a little bit more time with you, or maybe you have an aggressive behaviour, which means we will need to put in a little bit more resources—if you happen to be one of those, then we don't want you. We don't want you because we're not going to make any money if we take you. If you're a healthy, English-speaking Ontarian who can be in and out of there quickly, sure the wait time strategy will help you. But if you happen to be a new immigrant, somebody with a mental health issue or somebody who needs a little more care or more resources, the resources put into those surgeries are not going to be enough. As hospitals struggle to balance their budgets, they start to look at those clients as, "Maybe that one will go to the bottom of the list, because we're not going to make any money"—because now we're not funded on a global budget where you decide who needs care based on the needs of the person; you now have this new financial formula that says, "You get that much money. It doesn't matter what the needs of the person you're going to serve are." So what do hospitals do? They say, "With that much money, I can serve that kind of client. And if you don't happen to be that kind of client and you're going to cost me more than that amount of money, then maybe we're busy or I hear my mother calling me. Anyway, you're at the bottom of the list."

This is not the kind of care we want in Ontario. This wait times strategy is a way to pay for procedures on a per-procedure basis and it goes against what medicare is all about: that you provide care based on the needs of the person, not on the amount of money the government is willing to give you for that strategy.

Funny, things like children's mental health services are not on the list. Addiction counselling is not on the list, either. You'll never see women's health on the list. And children's treatment centres? I don't think so. The procedures that have some sex appeal and strong lobbying behind them make it to the list; the rest of them don't.

This is not the kind of health care we want in Ontario. We want the health system to treat people based on their needs, not on how fancy their diseases or procedures are.

I want to talk a little bit about hospitals trying to balance their books. The new health care premium bringing

more money into health care led us to believe that there would be more money to pay for hospital services. Well, this is not the case. As my colleague has mentioned, over 60% of the hospitals in Ontario don't think that they'll be able to balance their budgets.

In my riding, I had a constituent come to me and say, "I hurt my shoulder a year or so ago. I was referred to physiotherapy and they called me within a couple of weeks." He happened to hurt the other shoulder in August of this year. His physician referred him to physiotherapy, and he has been on the waiting list ever since because the hospital, in trying to balance its books, has downloaded physiotherapy services into the community. If you go into community physiotherapy, you have to pay for the service. It will only be free if you go to the hospital. But the hospital has kept so few of those physiotherapists on staff that the waiting list now stands at 400. He has been on the urgent waiting list for the last eight months, and he now stands at 167 on the list. By the time he's seen, his shoulder will be frozen and he will need way more care than if he had been seen in a regular time-frame.

This health tax has not made anybody healthier. It has been taxing the poor and the low-income families to the detriment of their own health and their own pocketbooks, I would say. It is a regressive tax because it taxes the poor, the low-income and middle-income families more than it does the people making \$100,000 and \$200,000 a year.

This needs to go to committee because the McGuinty government needs to hear what it means to the people of Ontario to pay that tax. It is so regressive; it is unfair.

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier):** Further debate?

**Mrs. Carol Mitchell:** I will be splitting my time with the member from Thunder Bay—Atikokan.

I can tell you that it really is my pleasure to rise tonight and to speak about the premium. But before I do that, I want to just go back in time to 2003, when we became the government.

One of the things that I did in my riding of Huron—Bruce was have budget consultations. We held round-table discussions about how the people of Huron—Bruce wanted their tax dollars spent. At that time, we knew that the previous government had left us with a \$5.6-billion deficit, and I can tell you that the people from Huron—Bruce were shocked, because that certainly was not what they were told by that party prior to the election.

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But what the people of Huron—Bruce told me was that they were prepared to pay a dedicated tax that was targeted specifically, be it to health care, be it to social services, be it to infrastructure. They were prepared to do that. I took that back to Toronto after numerous round table discussions with my constituents and shared that information, and then the budget came forward. I can tell you that I went back to Huron—Bruce and was very clear on what the health tax—the premium—would be going towards.



I know that the members in the House this evening want to know: How was that money spent in the riding of Huron-Bruce? I can tell you that this is one riding in all of the province of Ontario, but the difference it has made in my riding is absolutely incredible. We know 500,000 people today have access to a primary health care provider, that being their family doctor. But in the riding of Huron-Bruce, what does that number look like and what does that represent? Within the riding of Huron-Bruce, there are seven new family health teams.

**Hon. Deborah Matthews:** Seven?

**Mrs. Carol Mitchell:** Seven. Just to get a sense of it, I just want to talk about one for a minute, and it's called the Brockton family health team. The Brockton family health team has offices in Mildmay, Paisley and Walkerton. In Paisley, they have never had a clinic, not ever. This is a village that has never had the ability to bring services to their village. Mildmay—a brand new clinic. They had such a wonderful response to the fundraising that not only did they get their money for the clinic but they also received so much money in fundraising dollars that they were able to provide more services. That's just one of the seven, but I wanted to share that good news.

Then I look at the redevelopment of our long-term care. "What's happening in Huron-Bruce?" you want to know. Well, I can tell you that the Blue Water Rest Home in Zurich had been working for over a decade to get the plan to go forward to redevelop for these much-needed long-term-care beds. It's been delivered.

When we talk about redevelopment, our hospitals, I have eight hospitals within the riding, so we know what we speak of when we talk about hospitals. Of those hospitals, do you want to know how many are being redeveloped right now, because I know the comments made by the opposition and the comments made by the third party—I mean, one says get rid of the tax; the other one says the tax is not enough. But in my riding, what did that mean? Exeter hospital, Kincardine hospital, Wingham hospital, Goderich hospital: Of the eight, four are going forward with redevelopment.

I want to share this story. In the previous government, how many hospitals do you think were threatened with closure? About half. Those are the hospitals that are going forward. That's the difference it has made in the riding of Huron-Bruce just with redevelopment.

Let's talk about cataract surgery. We know that for cataract surgery today, the people of Ontario are experiencing a 61% reduction in wait times. I know that all the members want to know what that means to the riding of Huron-Bruce. What that means is, we provide cataract surgery at another of my hospitals, Clinton hospital—

*Interjection.*

**Mrs. Carol Mitchell:** Yes, you're very familiar with that hospital. They have been able to triple the number of cataract surgeries they're doing in our hospital, Clinton. When I think about that—because I can remember, when I was the head of the municipality, we were burning in barrels to save our hospital, with the previous government, just to raise the awareness of how important it was.

I know sometimes there are comments from that side of the House about the premiums and how those dollars are allocated. I think we need to remind people of what that really means to the people of Ontario, what that means for someone who lives in the riding of Huron-Bruce.

But there's more good news. Goderich hospital, as I told you, was also going through a redevelopment. They also have approval to move forward with a CT scanner. Huron county is the last county in the province of Ontario to receive a CT scanner. I know that all the members of the House want to know how much money has been raised in Goderich to pay for that CT scanner, and I can tell that you \$4.2 million has been raised in the town of Goderich.

When we talk about what difference the health premium makes, we can think about all the examples specifically that have happened in Huron-Bruce. I'm very proud of the investments that have been made throughout Ontario, and specifically in the riding of Huron-Bruce, but I am also very proud that the review that will happen will be through the finance committee and there will be discussion on it. We committed to do it and we will go forward with it. As we did through the budget, we will also see the review about the health premium go forward.

I want to thank you, Mr. Speaker, for allowing me to share all the good news from Huron-Bruce. And now, the member from Thunder Bay-Atikokan.

**Mr. Bill Mauro:** I want to thank the member from Huron-Bruce for sharing her time and for that rousing introduction. I appreciate it.

I listened intently to the speakers from the other parties, as well as the member from Huron-Bruce, and I thank them for their comments. I think it's rather important for me, though, to put on the record what I consider one or two significant results of the introduction of the health premium in my riding.

In the election of 2003, when I first ran provincially, it may come as a surprise to some that the Thunder Bay Regional Health Sciences Centre, the main hospital in my riding, which services a population of about 250,000 people in northwestern Ontario, heretofore was never able to provide angioplasty services. It was 2003 and angioplasty services were not able to be provided in a hospital that serviced a region with 250,000 people in it. On an annual basis, anywhere from 400 to 500 people who required that surgery had to leave Thunder Bay and northwestern Ontario and travel to southern Ontario, to communities like Ottawa, London, Toronto and Hamilton. A significant cost would accrue back to the taxpayers of the province to have it done, and also a significant cost would accrue back to not only the individuals who had to have the service but to their families who wanted to travel with them to support them during an extremely emotional time.

That was a commitment I made in 2003, and I stand here today very proud that through the health premium, through our government's investment of significant financial resources into the health care sector, we have announced and have begun providing angioplasty ser-



vices at our Thunder Bay Regional Health Sciences Centre. It's servicing, in fact, an entire district. Without the introduction of that premium, I'm not sure if we would have been able to meet that commitment and provide that incredible service.

The second thing I'd also like to leave people with tonight that I think is a direct result of the introduction of that premium is a commitment by the health minister, just confirmed here, that was a commitment I made in the election of 2007—to try to see what we could do to fund a prostate-specific antigen test for men. I introduced two private members' bills on that issue. As many will have heard here not long ago, the Minister of Health has now committed to seeing that program up and running in very short order. It's another significant move forward on the part of our government, two major pieces that I've out-

lined, and as the member from Huron–Bruce and others have mentioned, there are significant results all of us can list that are tangible, real, and help the people in their ridings—not just members on this side of the House, but I would expect members on the other side, on the opposition benches as well.

So while it may be controversial for some in the other parties, the premium has shown some incredible, tangible benefits to the people in most, if not all, of the ridings in this province. I'm happy that it's there and I hope we keep it there.

*Debate deemed adjourned.*

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier):** It being 9:30 of the clock, this House is adjourned until 1:30 of the clock on Wednesday, April 9.

*The House adjourned at 2130.*

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of Ontario**

First Session, 39<sup>th</sup> Parliament

**Assemblée législative  
de l'Ontario**

Première session, 39<sup>e</sup> législature

**Official Report  
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(Hansard)**

**Journal  
des débats  
(Hansard)**

**Wednesday 9 April 2008**

**Mercredi 9 avril 2008**

Speaker  
Honourable Steve Peters

Président  
L'honorable Steve Peters

Clerk  
Deborah Deller

Greffière  
Deborah Deller



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## LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 9 April 2008

## ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 9 avril 2008

*The House met at 1330.*

*Prayers.*

### ESTIMATES

**Hon. Brad Duguid:** I have a message from the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor signed by his own hand.

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** The Lieutenant Governor transmits estimates of certain sums required for the services of the province for the year ending 31 March 2009 and recommends them to the Legislative Assembly.

Dated April 9, 2008, signed by David Onley, Lieutenant Governor.

### MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

#### WATER QUALITY IN ABORIGINAL COMMUNITIES

**Mr. Norm Miller:** It appears that this government has still not learned from its experience with Kashechewan, when it waited for two weeks before evacuating the community after E. coli was discovered in their drinking water. A recent report by the Canadian Medical Association Journal points to an alarming number of boil-water advisories in hundreds of Ontario municipalities, but the most serious problems continue to occur in our aboriginal communities, many of which have been plagued by boil-water advisories that have lasted for years.

In a speech delivered at Laurentian University, former Lieutenant Governor James Bartleman pointed out disgraceful conditions facing aboriginals across the province: "In the isolated, fly-in communities, 50% of the communities are on boil-water advisories," said Bartleman. He continued, "Despite the fact we are in 2008; despite the fact we are going around the world preaching to everybody about how bad they are ... and how badly they treat their minorities, here in Canada we have a situation which is utterly disgraceful."

We continue to see announcements from this government that promise to improve the quality of life for aboriginals, but these communities should not have to wait any longer for access to basic necessities. If the McGuinty government is serious about helping Ontario's aboriginal population, it will take action now to improve the conditions for the aboriginal people in this province.

### CARLETON UNIVERSITY CHARITY BALL

**Mr. Yasir Naqvi:** I'm pleased to rise in the House and share with the members of this chamber the wonderful charitable work of my university and a great institution in my riding of Ottawa Centre, Carleton University.

For the past 21 years, students at Carleton University have gathered together to organize a gala ball and, through this work, have created the Carleton University students' charity ball endowment fund. These funds, combined with a portion of the charity ball's revenue, are donated directly to two Ottawa-area charitable organizations. Since its inception in 1988, the ball has raised in excess of \$212,000 for local Ottawa charities.

I had the honour of participating in this year's charity ball, which was held at the Canadian Museum of Civilization and based on the theme "A Glacial Gala."

The proceeds of this year's event were donated to two main charities: the Rideau Valley Wildlife Sanctuary and Rideau Street Youth Enterprises. As well, funding was provided to Habitat for Humanity Environmental Build and Sage Youth.

I would like to commend the members of the organizing committee, the volunteers and all those who had a hand in making the 2008 charity ball a big hit with the Carleton University community. The students' hard work and dedication made the event a tremendous success, and I know that next year's ball will be even better.

### DOCTOR SHORTAGE

**Mr. Ted Arnott:** I rise this afternoon to inform the House of an urgent health care crisis in Wellington-Halton Hills, which must impel the immediate attention of the Minister of Health.

In recent days, 3,600 people in the eastern part of Wellington county have lost local access to their family doctors.

A trusted relationship, continuity of care, health service close to home: All of these are lost when someone loses a family doctor. When you or someone in your family is sick, you have no alternative but to visit an already crowded hospital emergency department. In many cases, you'll wait hours for care.



This Minister of Health, who boasts of being the longest-serving Minister of Health in recent times, has had five years to fix this problem.

We all know that the roots of the doctor shortage go back to the Bob Rae government's decision to reduce medical school spaces by up to 15%. The lasting consequences of that terrible decision have been devastating for public health care in Ontario.

Just this month, the president of the Ontario Medical Association said that there are a million people in Ontario without a family doctor. On this basic measure of quality of life, Ontario ranks last in Canada, under the McGuinty Liberal government. What an indictment of failure.

My constituent Jane Vandervliet of Erin asks, "What are you doing to cure the deathly ill health care system?"

I urge the Minister of Health to address the health care crisis facing Erin, Hillsburgh and Rockwood. Ontarians deserve a plan—one that actually works—from this minister to solve the doctor shortage once and for all.

### VOLUNTEERS

**Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti:** I am delighted to rise today to honour Nora Smith, a constituent of Scarborough Southwest who, this spring, will receive a 30-year volunteer service award.

Since 1975, at the age of 48, Nora Smith has volunteered at Leisureworld Scarborough, a long-term-care facility in Cliffside Village, located close to the Scarborough Bluffs. Around twice a month, Nora comes in to play the piano for United, Presbyterian and Anglican church services, memorial services and hymn-sing programs.

Nora is assisted by her husband, Ron, a 27-year volunteer, who pitches in with the annual Jingle Bazaar book table, the Christmas tea and the spring tea.

I am proud that the riding of Scarborough Southwest is home to some outstanding volunteers. Eleven other dedicated volunteers in Scarborough Southwest will also be receiving volunteer service awards this spring, and I congratulate each and every one of them today.

Each year, more than five million Ontarians volunteer their time to make their communities stronger. Volunteerism is the cornerstone of all successful communities.

I've had the pleasure to meet hundreds of volunteers during my time as the representative of Scarborough Southwest. I want to take this opportunity to thank all Ontarians who make contributions in making Ontario a better place to live.

I hope to meet many more volunteers in the years to come and to continue to see the hard work that they do for the people of Scarborough Southwest and for all of Ontario.

### EVENTS IN TIBET

**Mr. Randy Hillier:** As the McGuinty government pursues trivial matters which limit individual choice, freedom and judgment, they duck the real fight for

human rights in Tibet, where the whip of a dictatorship prevails, where thugs and slugs deny the innocent freedom and justice.

In the Olympic charter, "Olympism seeks to create a way of life based on the joy of effort, the educational value of good example and respect for universal fundamental ethical principles." Meanwhile, the Communist propaganda tour deserves a gold medal for their oppression, violence and intolerance.

### 1340

Paramilitary thugs now escort the Olympic torch, mocking our ideals, our beliefs, our foundations. The Olympic flame, a symbol of hope and humanity, now stands as a darkened symbol of tyranny and repression.

No wonder the Olympic flame is not coming to Ontario; our Liberal ministers are going to China. With open arms, they embrace Communist China and its disregard for individual choice and freedom.

Tomorrow, I will once again proudly stand with those who strive for justice, democracy and freedom. I invite all of you to join me at the Chinese consulate tomorrow, where I will lend my voice to those ignored a world away. And I will not be alone.

### ONTARIO CONFEDERATION OF UNIVERSITY FACULTY ASSOCIATIONS

**Mr. Rosario Marchese:** Today, I would like to welcome members from the Ontario Confederation of University Faculty Associations, or OCUFA, to Queen's Park. This organization represents 23 faculty associations and over 15,000 university faculty and academic librarians in Ontario. Their mandate is to maintain and enhance the quality of higher education in Ontario.

They are concerned about the persistent threats to the quality of post-secondary education in Ontario. They're here today at Queen's Park to offer solutions to these threats, including more support for faculty hiring to keep up with increasing enrolments.

With us today are Professor Brian E. Brown, president of OCUFA and the faculty association at the University of Windsor, and Kimberly Benoit from the faculty association at Brock. They are hosting their reception this evening at Queen's Park from 5 p.m. to 7 p.m. in rooms 228 and 230, and they are hoping a lot of members of provincial Parliament are going to be there. I urge you, and they urge you, to come.

### CLIMATE CHANGE AWARENESS DAY

**Mr. Phil McNeely:** Climate Change Awareness Day in the riding of Ottawa—Orléans will take place on April 21 this year.

High schools in my riding are participating in our second annual Ottawa—Orléans climate change challenge. Students have worked very hard to produce videos on how we as individuals can help prevent climate change by reducing our carbon footprint.

These schools are École secondaire publique Louis-Riel, Cairine Wilson Secondary School, École secondaire catholique Garneau, Sir Wilfrid Laurier Secondary School, École secondaire catholique Béatrice-Desloges and St. Matthew Catholic High School.

Our highly devoted and environmentally conscious teachers have made this challenge a priority in their schools.

Several of our community leaders have graciously agreed to act as judges for the challenge. Judi Cane, Dan Biocchi, Sandra MacInnes, Simon Evanik, Marcel Gibeault, André Gascon and André Brisbois will be there to do the judging.

Pizza and trophies, notably the beautiful polar bear award, are being made possible by generous donations from three sponsors: Waste Management Canada, the Cement Association of Canada and Enbridge.

I would also like to acknowledge Dana Silk and the EnviroCentre for helping to coordinate our event.

The top two teams of students will win an exciting day trip to Queen's Park, courtesy of VIA Rail, where they will meet the Minister of the Environment, dine in the legislative dining room and be acknowledged in this House by our esteemed Speaker.

I would like to close by saying that I am so proud of the spirit, creativity and maturity of the students in Ottawa-Orléans. I hope everyone in this House will welcome the winners when they arrive for a visit.

### CREDIT VALLEY HOSPITAL

**Mr. Bob Delaney:** What a glorious spring day for the city of Mississauga. The final contracts for the phase 2 expansion of Credit Valley Hospital have been signed. We're building our hospital again in western Mississauga.

Phase 2 will increase Credit Valley's bed capacity to 471 beds. The labour and delivery rooms will double from seven to 15. An expanded laboratory will provide more in-house support for diagnostics. We're adding much-needed beds and support for palliative and complex continuing care to serve our aging population.

More than 270,000 square feet of new construction will start this year and some 70,000 square feet of space at Credit Valley Hospital will be completely renovated.

This vital new project at Credit Valley Hospital means that more expecting moms will be able to give birth closer to home. It means our baby boom generation will have local facilities and resources to look after their aging parents. And it means that if you do end up in Credit Valley Hospital, you're more likely to get a bed in a room than a stretcher in a hallway.

Phase 2 is how Mississauga says that we choose world-class health care over a tax cut.

### EDUCATION

**Mrs. Carol Mitchell:** I rise in the House today to provide an update to the honourable members about

some recent praise of Ontario's education system. We're seeing positive results after four-and-a-half years of investments by this government in our publicly funded schools: We've restored peace and stability to the classroom, class sizes are getting smaller, test results have jumped higher and more students are graduating.

Last week, a colleague of ours told an audience in Sudbury that Ontario has an education system that is doing a good job. Who said it? Well, you will be interested to know it was John Tory, last Friday in a speech to the local chamber of commerce. More praise came from another colleague during a breakfast speech in Brampton yesterday. He said Ontario has one of the best education systems in the world. Who said it? Well, that came from John Tory.

I appreciate that while touring the province and talking down Ontario, Mr. Tory has found the time to recognize the McGuinty government's achievements in cleaning up education after the mess that they left behind.

We will continue to provide support so that our students are able to reach their full potential. We will continue investing in students, teachers, educators and parents, to ensure students get what they need to be successful in schools and in life, ensuring that Ontario remains a world leader in publicly funded education.

### REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

#### STANDING COMMITTEE ON REGULATIONS AND PRIVATE BILLS

**Mr. Michael Prue:** I beg leave to present a report from the standing committee on regulations and private bills and move its adoption.

**The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Tonia Grannum):** The standing committee on regulations and private bills presents the committee's report as follows:

Your committee begs to report the following bill without amendment:

Bill Pr2, An Act to revive Grand Avenue Holdings Ltd.

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Should the report be received and adopted? Agreed.

*Report adopted.*

#### STANDING COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** I beg to inform the House that today the Clerk received the report on intended appointments dated April 9, 2008, of the standing committee on government agencies. Pursuant to standing order 106(e)(9), the report is deemed to be adopted by the House.

*Report deemed adopted.*



## INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

UNLAWFUL FIREARMS  
IN VEHICLES ACT, 2008LOI DE 2008 SUR LES ARMES À FEU  
ILLÉGALES DANS LES VÉHICULES

Mr. Colle moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 56, An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act and the Civil Remedies Act, 2001 to promote public safety and suppress conditions leading to crime by prohibiting driving on the highway in a motor vehicle in which there is an unlawfully possessed firearm / Projet de loi 56, Loi modifiant le Code de la route et la Loi de 2001 sur les recours civils afin de promouvoir la sécurité publique et d'éliminer les conditions engendrant le crime en interdisant la conduite sur la voie publique d'un véhicule automobile dans lequel se trouve une arme à feu dont la possession est illégale.

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

*First reading agreed to.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** The member for a short statement?

**Mr. Mike Colle:** The purpose of the Unlawful Firearms in Vehicles Act is to promote public safety and suppress conditions that lead to criminal activities by adding to the Highway Traffic Act the new section 172.0.1, which makes it an offence to drive on a highway in a motor vehicle in which there is an unlawfully possessed firearm. A police officer who has reasonable probable grounds for believing an offence has been committed shall request the surrender of the driver's licence and detain the vehicle. The licence is suspended for seven days and the vehicle is impounded for the same length of time. The new section applies to drivers' licences issued both inside and of Ontario.

## MOTIONS

## HOUSE SITTINGS

**Hon. Michael Bryant:** Pursuant to standing order 9(c)(i), the House shall meet from 6:45 p.m. to 9:30 p.m. on Wednesday, April 9, 2008, for the purpose of considering government business.

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

Those in favour will say "aye."

Those opposed will say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

*The division bells rang from 1350 to 1355.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Members will please take their seats.

Mr. Bryant has moved government notice of motion number 38. All those in favour will please rise one at a time and be recorded by the Clerk.

## Ayes

Aggelonitis, Sophia	Dombrowsky, Leona	Moridi, Reza
Albanese, Laura	Duguid, Brad	Naqvi, Yasir
Arthurs, Wayne	Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Oraziotti, David
Balkissoon, Bas	Fonseca, Peter	Phillips, Gerry
Bentley, Christopher	Gravelle, Michael	Pupatello, Sandra
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Hoy, Pat	Ramal, Khalil
Best, Margaret	Jaczek, Helena	Ramsay, David
Bradley, James J.	Kular, Kuldip	Ruprecht, Tony
Brown, Michael A.	Kwinter, Monte	Sandals, Liz
Brownell, Jim	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Smith, Monique
Bryant, Michael	Mangat, Amrit	Smitherman, George
Cansfield, Donna H.	Matthews, Deborah	Sousa, Charles
Caplan, David	Mauro, Bill	Takhar, Harinder S.
Carroll, Aileen	McGuinty, Dalton	Van Bommel, Maria
Colle, Mike	McNeely, Phil	Watson, Jim
Crozier, Bruce	Meilleur, Madeleine	Wilkinson, John
Delaney, Bob	Milloy, John	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Dickson, Joe	Mitchell, Carol	Zimmer, David

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** All those opposed will please rise and be recorded by the Clerk.

## Nays

Barrett, Toby	Kormos, Peter	Savoline, Joyce
Chudleigh, Ted	MacLeod, Lisa	Scott, Laurie
DiNovo, Cheri	Marchese, Rosario	Shurman, Peter
Elliott, Christine	Martiniuk, Gerry	Tabuns, Peter
Gélinas, France	Miller, Norm	Wilson, Jim
Hillier, Randy	Miller, Paul	Witmer, Elizabeth
Horwath, Andrea	O'Toole, John	Yakubuski, John
Hudak, Tim	Prue, Michael	
Jones, Sylvia	Runciman, Robert W.	

**The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller):** The ayes are 54; the nays are 25.

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** I declare the motion carried.

*Agreed to.*

1400

## VISITORS

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** I would like to introduce some guests on behalf of members in the House today.

First, in the Speaker's gallery, Mr. Paul Davis and Mr. Stan Newman, brother and partner of Kim Davis, who works in my constituency office. Welcome today, gentlemen.

From one of the finest newspapers in southwestern Ontario and one of the last true broadsheet newspapers left, Mr. John Huston, the publisher of the Aylmer Express, and Rob Perry, one of his reporters. Welcome today in the Speaker's gallery.

In the west members' gallery, on behalf of the member from Parkdale-High Park, we'd like to welcome Mr. Michael Craig, chair of the China Rights Network.

Again in the west members' gallery, on behalf of the member from Parkdale-High Park, Mr. Wayne Samuelson, president of the Ontario Federation of Labour.

On behalf of page Bethany Jones, in the east members' gallery this afternoon, Ruth Jones. Welcome to Queen's Park.

On behalf of the member from Willowdale, in the east members' gallery, Mr. Phillip Hein, a member of the United Nations Committee for Developmental Policy from New York, and his wife, Catherine Hein, who is from the International Labour Organization, dealing with the Indian Ocean, from the United Nations in Geneva in the east members' gallery. Welcome to Queen's Park today. Of course, in the east gallery is David's wife, Donna. We welcome you as well.

On behalf of the member from Eglinton-Lawrence, seated in the east gallery today are representatives from the Eglinton Flats public safety committee—its president, Yoeville Caddle, George Clarke, Joseph Bart, Danny Edwards, and Junior T. Jordan—and from the Lawrence Heights community, Deeka Abdikarim, Marian Abdikarim and Halimo Ragé. Welcome to Queen's Park today.

## ORAL QUESTIONS

### HEALTH CARE FUNDING

**Mr. Robert W. Runciman:** My question is for the Premier. Premier, over the past several years, when Ontarians have expressed concerns regarding your government's high taxes and reckless spending, you've consistently told them, "Don't worry. We're doing it to protect the delivery of services, because we won't, for example, cut hospital services; we won't fire nurses." We now know that hospital beds will be closed and nurses will be fired, and this may be just the beginning. Premier, I don't think it is an unfair judgment to suggest that you sold the people a pig in a poke. How can you possibly defend your high-taxing policies now?

**Hon. Dalton McGuinty:** I disagree with the premise of the question, the notion that somehow we're going to be closing hospital beds or laying off nurses.

I think it is important to understand just how strong our commitment to health care is for all of us. Since 2003, we have increased funding by 37%. Put that in contrast to the about 1% as the rate of economic growth that is projected for the coming year. That is \$11.1 billion more. With that, we have been able to do great things for all Ontario families, whether to find doctors for 500,000 more people, to reduce wait times for hip and knee surgeries and cataract procedures and the like, or to hire thousands more nurses. We have 100 hospital construction projects either completed or under way. We've made a massive investment in health care on behalf of Ontarians. There is always still more work to be done, but again, by any objective assessment, we've made some real progress.

**Mr. Robert W. Runciman:** It's a consistent pattern. Again, the Premier has declined to answer a very direct

question. Twice in this House yesterday, the Premier said his government is not firing nurses, and we have to wonder if the health minister is so distracted that he is not briefing the Premier. They are firing nurses.

You are firing nurses, or have you accepted your minister's logic that nurses aren't real people?

A significant number of hospitals in Ontario are facing deficits this year, just like the Rouge Valley hospitals. Premier, are you again burying your head in the sand on health care like you have done for three-plus years on the looming crisis in the economy in the manufacturing sector? Is that your approach to this concern as well?

**Hon. Dalton McGuinty:** I just think that \$11.1 billion, a 37% increase in funding over the course of four years, is a lot of money. Ontarians may have heard many of us say over time that about one half of all program spending is now devoted to health care. Some 40% of all that money is devoted to the people aged over 65. They're going to double in number over the course of the next 20 years. One in three Ontarians is now being diagnosed with cancer; one in four is dying of cancer. We doubled the cancer drug budget in the past four years; we've increased that dramatically.

There are some real challenges. One of the things we've asked our hospitals to do is to work with us. We've expanded their funding dramatically, but we've asked them to find a way to live within those constraints—not an easy thing to do. I know the Minister of Health is working with all Ontario hospitals to find a way to manage these considerable increases. There's always a greater demand for more—I understand that—but we're going to find a way to work through this together.

**Mr. Robert W. Runciman:** Nurses aren't the only victims of this government's policies. I want to give the Premier a real-person example of what his government's high taxes and pork-barrelling have done to the province. Morris Bradley of Burlington has been unemployed twice in the last two years because of plant closings. He's supporting a family of four on \$325 a week, which runs out in May. At that time he's going in for surgery and then will have rehab for four to six months—no income, no insurance.

I think it can be legitimately argued that the government across the way, starting over three years ago, failed to address the looming economic crisis. That has cost Mr. Bradley and many others their jobs. Your bloated sunshine list will suggest to most that there will be more high-salaried executive types on the payroll and fewer nurses to care for him when they're in the hospital.

Premier, you like to wash your hands of responsibility with respect to what's happening in the economy. What do you have to say to Mr. Bradley and thousands of others who've lost their jobs under your watch and under your policies?

**Hon. Dalton McGuinty:** Well—

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** I ask the member: Was that his final supplementary or was that a new question?



**Mr. Robert W. Runciman:** It was the final supplementary.

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** I didn't hear anything that dealt with the initial two questions, and I'm just going to move to the next question.

#### NURSES

**Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer:** Premier, you fired about 800 nurses in 2005, and yesterday we learned that 72 more nurses are going to be fired from Rouge Valley Health System as that hospital struggles, along with all the other hospitals in this province, to balance their budgets at a time when we have a growing and aging population with very complex needs, which is driving up hospital costs. I'd like to ask you, Premier: Why did your minister respond in such a cavalier way to the firing of these nurses yesterday by saying that they were "not necessarily real people," and that this may be a necessary evil when everyone in the province knows that we need more nurses and we face a nursing shortage?

**Hon. Dalton McGuinty:** To the Minister of Health.

**Hon. George Smitherman:** One thing I think is important whenever that party is asking us about health care expenditures on a day when our estimates are tabled and show a further investment on the part of our government of more than \$2 billion: What is the premise of their question when they have plans to cut health care spending by \$3 billion?

Now to the matter of Rouge Valley: Not one nurse at Rouge Valley has been laid off. There is some speculation about the prospect for layoffs. Not one has been laid off. Of the 800 that the member raises, please bring me one name of a nurse from those 800 who was laid off. This is all speculative.

1410

On the point about positions and actual named nurses, sometimes an organization has a position—nursing position X—and they eliminate it. But there is not an individual in that position. So I say to the honourable member: We do have some speculation about the prospect of this occurring. It has not. Not one nurse has been laid off, and I look forward to the opportunity for the honourable member to actually bring me a situation where an individual nurse has been laid off at Rouge Valley.

**Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer:** Mr. Speaker, through you, again, to the Premier: Your minister's comments yesterday indicating that nurses should be happy and that they don't need to worry because they can get a job nearby had a very chilling impact on the nursing community. In fact, two nurses were interviewed on CBC Radio this morning in response to this, "Don't worry, be happy, you can work elsewhere." Their comments were as follows: "Well, that's fine for him"—referring to your minister—"maybe he could get a job nearby." But they talked about the fact that if they needed to go from an institution where they've worked for 20 to 25 years and had to retrain, they might just retrain for another job, rather than

continuing as a nurse. The comment from the other nurse was, "Well, you know, maybe it's time to move to the United States to get a job."

This is the impact your minister's cavalier comments had that chilled the nursing community. I say to you today: Why did he respond in this way when we desperately need to retain nurses?

**Hon. George Smitherman:** If my comments can be characterized as chilling, then it was a downright flash freeze that brought that government to eliminate thousands of nursing positions overnight. In fact, at the nurse practitioner-led clinic in Sudbury, Ontario, they have a hula hoop affixed to the wall as a constant reminder of that member who was the longest-serving Minister of Health in the Mike Harris government.

We believe in our nurses. We're proud to see that our new nursing graduate guarantee has produced 85% of nurses transitioning to full-time employment. We were also proud to see the recent ratification of an agreement between the Ontario Nurses' Association and the Ontario Hospital Association at the highest degree of ratification in the memory of any people that are associated with it. With respect to Rouge Valley, there's lots of speculation—indeed, it abounds—but not one nurse has been laid off at Rouge Valley, and I'm working with nursing leaders to ensure that that is the trend that continues.

**Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer:** Well, it was the RNAO that indicated yesterday about the impact of these layoffs, this firing and the chilling impact it had on the nursing community. Obviously, nurses are concerned. I can tell you the public is concerned. It's been a topic of discussion on talk radio.

You fail to understand that we have a growing and aging population with more complex needs. We have growth in volumes in our emergency rooms—you haven't been able to fix that problem. We are not able to discharge patients from hospitals, and 20 % of the beds are occupied by people who should be in home care or alternative levels of care, which you haven't made available.

I say to you today, Premier: Will you guarantee that no nurses will be fired or no hospital beds closed this year?

**Hon. George Smitherman:** It seems like today the honourable member alerts to the growing demographic challenge that faces health care. But I ask her again: Why are you so proudly part of a party that has on their books, and will call for again today, a \$3-billion cut to health care?

This morning, I spoke to Doris Grinspun. She's the head of the Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario. I asked her about her use of the word "chilling." I did see it as a very strong word, and she said, "It is because the spectre of cuts that was at the heart of their agenda for the years that they were in office is so remarkably memorable to nurses that any time there is a threatened disruption, this is a very, very big concern." We agree. Nurses must have the opportunity to work where they work. Not one nurse has been laid off at Rouge Valley,



and I am not done yet in working to try and ensure that no nurse is laid off at Rouge Valley.

## INTERNATIONAL TRADE

**Mr. Howard Hampton:** To the Premier: New Democrats are concerned about human rights. Our concern is shared by many others, including the China Rights Network, which is represented here today. We believe the government of Ontario has a unique opportunity to send a strong message on human rights, on how the world ought to be, to the government of China—a message that what is happening in Tibet right now is wrong.

My question is this: Why is the McGuinty government's Minister of Economic Development and Trade going to China now? Why is the Premier putting trade ahead of human rights?

**Hon. Dalton McGuinty:** I just don't see it that way; I don't see it as Canada choosing one or the other, and that's in keeping with the approach to foreign policy that we've brought as a nation for some 40 years now at least, where we pursued a policy of constructive engagement—the notion that we can approach so many other nations with our strong Canadian brand, be well received and have an opportunity to enter into discussions that extend beyond trade and give us a chance to influence, as a result of an ongoing strong, productive, positive relationship. That's been the foundation for our foreign policy for a long time now.

I think it's important that the minister visit China. I was heartened to learn that the Prime Minister decided that Canada is not going to boycott the Olympics. I think, as a nation, we have a responsibility to be there and to continue to influence.

**Mr. Howard Hampton:** Not that many years ago the world was faced with a situation in South Africa, and provincial governments, state governments and federal governments spoke out in unison. They said, "This is unacceptable." Their willingness to speak out on human rights produced a change, a change that everyone across the world has welcomed. Your government is trying to duck on this issue. When you were asked earlier this week whether the minister was going to China, your spokesperson tried to say that she didn't know a trip was planned.

I say again, Premier, there is a unique opportunity here to produce change in the world—positive, progressive change—and to speak out on human rights. Why is the McGuinty government trying to hide from the issue? Why are you playing duck and run? Why are you trying to deny that your minister is even going to China?

**Hon. Dalton McGuinty:** I'm not sure there is any truth in any part of that question. The minister has indicated on at least two public occasions in the context of speeches that she's going to China to open up a new international office.

The choice here is to disengage, to pull back and somehow hope that things that are not in keeping with what we see as an ideal situation improve on their own.

The policy that Canada has adopted for 40 years now is one of constructive engagement, where we maintain a dialogue, where we seek to influence each other in an ongoing way. That's the way that we Canadians have done it for a long, long time. I continue to support that policy.

I've also said publicly that should our federal government decide that it would be inappropriate for my minister to attend—if we're adopting that as a national policy—then we will, obviously, carefully consider that.

**Mr. Howard Hampton:** The McGuinty Minister of Economic Development and Trade doesn't answer to Prime Minister Harper. We've seen that; that's quite evident. The McGuinty Minister of Economic Development and Trade reports directly to you.

Just about 18 months ago when you went to China, Pakistan and India, the trip was announced well in advance. When the minister went to China, the trip was announced well in advance. When your spokesperson was asked earlier this week, "Is the minister going to China?" your spokesperson tried to say, "I don't know of any such trip." When the minister's spokesperson was asked, again the answer was, "We have no details about any such trip."

There is a unique opportunity here, Premier. It's not about the federal government; it's about whether or not the McGuinty government is actually going to speak up about human rights. It's not about ending trade with China—no one's proposing that; no one's proposing that we boycott the Olympics. It's about seizing the opportunity. Will you speak out about human rights, or are you going to continue to duck and run?

1420

**Hon. Dalton McGuinty:** Obviously today I'm here in question period, representing the government and being held to account, as I should be, when it comes to these kinds of issues. But the leader of the NDP would have us pursue a radically different policy. He would rather that we stay home. I think the Minister of Economic Development and Trade will have far more opportunities meeting with far more people of influence over there than she will here. That's the whole rationale behind constructive engagement: creating opportunities through ongoing and continuing dialogue to influence one another in a positive way. That's been Canada's role, to a large extent, on the international scene for decades. It's a role that I embrace, it's a responsibility that I accept, and that's why my minister is going to China.

## DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

**Mr. Howard Hampton:** Premier, I'm disappointed that the McGuinty government will not seize such a unique opportunity to speak out for human rights around the world.

I want to ask the Premier about his comments this morning when he said, "We want to demonstrate we take domestic violence seriously." My question is this: Is the



jailing of 19-year-old pregnant Noellee Mowatt for six days and six nights taking domestic violence seriously?

**Hon. Dalton McGuinty:** I know that the leader of the NDP will want to make reference to the entire transcript that was the result of that scrum. He will want to be reminded that something else I also said was that I was concerned about the circumstances and how they present themselves.

I have a 26-year-old daughter. This is a 19-year-old young woman. As a father, I think of her still as just a girl in some ways. That's concerning, obviously, but I also said that I'm not privy to all the facts. I have not heard all the arguments made by counsel on both sides. I don't want to second-guess the judge in his or her wisdom as to why he or she came to the conclusion that this was the appropriate thing to do in the circumstances. Maybe the leader of the NDP has other information and he's prepared to second-guess the judge, but I think it would be inappropriate for me to do so.

**Mr. Howard Hampton:** This is not about second-guessing a judge. The crown attorney, the agent of the Attorney General, went to court and asked for this 19-year-old woman to be incarcerated. That speaks to the policy of this government. It speaks to where you're coming from.

The Premier said this morning that this creates a little bit of discomfort for him. Unfortunately, Premier, your discomfort provides no comfort to victims of domestic violence. I want to know again: How does putting Ms. Mowatt in jail for six days and six nights send a positive message to women who are the victims of domestic violence?

**Hon. Dalton McGuinty:** To the Attorney General.

**Hon. Christopher Bentley:** To echo the Premier's comments, of course, whenever you take a look at a fact such as this in isolation from all the circumstances, it does create discomfort for us all. The former Attorney General does want to second-guess the decision of a judge and a justice of the peace even though it's a case before the courts. He wants to second-guess the circumstances. He wants us to hearken back to the time when I started practice, where there were no supports for those victims of domestic violence whatsoever, where police would often not lay a charge without supporting evidence—that's changed; where there were no crisis or other lines so that people could get immediate help—that's changed; where police were reluctant to prosecute—that's changed; where the evidence taken was not the best possible, such as videotaping, so that it couldn't be used later—that's changed; where many circumstances would result in cases being dropped before they got to court—that's changed—

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Thank you, Minister. Final supplementary.

**Mr. Howard Hampton:** The minister tries to say something has changed. We contacted Ms. Mowatt's lawyer, who says that since she has been incarcerated for six days and six nights, no police officer has gone to talk to her, no crown attorney has gone to talk to her, and no

victim services counsellor has gone to talk to her. She has literally been put in jail and left there for six days and six nights.

What was interesting is that a professor of social policy, director of the women's mental health program at the University of Toronto, says, "I agree that this whole thing is outrageous ... nobody has paid attention to the reasons that this young woman might have difficulty coming forward and testifying. Nobody has paid attention to the lack of resources—both psychological, financial and housing ... to allow her to move away from the situation."

What they're saying is, the services aren't there. Nobody has come to visit her. Nobody has come to talk to her. Nobody has come to counsel her. Your whole response has been to jail the victim, a 19-year-old woman who is the victim allegedly of domestic assault. What message does that send to other women across the province who are victims of domestic assault?

**Hon. Christopher Bentley:** For somebody who doesn't want to get involved in the case, as the member suggests, he is second-guessing decisions, and I suspect he doesn't know all the facts. He doesn't know all the facts, but he has decided to be the judge in this case.

So what happens now with people who complain about domestic violence is that the police immediately provide supportive services. They get the best possible evidence, often in ways that can support the victim's presentation in court. There are victim/witness programs that begin as soon as someone comes into contact and help them throughout the process. There are the quick response programs that were introduced just a year and a half ago to provide victims additional assistance, often monetary, to make sure. There are the bail verification and support programs, which ensure that before the accused is considered appropriate for release, the court has all the information in order to ensure the safety of the victim.

It is always the safety of the victim that is paramount. It is always important, before any judge or JP would make any decision like this, that they know all of the facts of the case, as he doesn't; all of the circumstances of the parties, as he doesn't; and all of the important issues relating to the safety of the victim, as he has no—

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** New question.

## INTERNATIONAL TRADE

**Mr. Ted Chudleigh:** My question is for the Minister of Economic Development and Trade. The secrecy surrounding this minister's junket to Beijing is perplexing. She boasts about the importance of this so-called trade mission but has kept the details far from the press and away from opposition members. We can't do our job if we don't know the details.

The secrecy continues. I've asked for information on all the names of all the people—not just staff—who will be joining the junket; not just the minister and staff, but what companies are going, as well as the itinerary, the dates and the total cost. I have yet to receive anything in writing. Perhaps the saying "Don't put it in writing"



applies here, especially when it looks like the minister has something or someone to hide.

Will the minister explain why she has yet to publicize the exact dates, the costs and detailed itinerary of her junket? Will she provide me with this information today?

**Hon. Sandra Pupatello:** As you know, I mentioned in the House the other day that I was very happy to be responsive to questions in the House.

As a matter of fact, after last question period your official leader of your party—he and I spoke on the telephone immediately after question period. I gave him the names of the individuals, exactly the amount that I had signed off for that may be spent, exactly who would be attending and what their positions would be. So perhaps you could organize some communication within your party.

I guess what's more important actually is that during this telephone conversation, I specifically said, "Is there something more that I can get for you?" And the leader of his party in fact said, "No that would be all. Thank you."

**Mr. Ted Chudleigh:** I'm not sure that there was anything truthful in that answer.

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** I'd ask that you withdraw the comment.

**Mr. Ted Chudleigh:** That's exactly the comment that the Premier made—

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Please don't argue with the Chair. I'm just asking you to withdraw the comment.

**Mr. Ted Chudleigh:** It's exactly the same comment.  
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**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** I'd just ask the member to withdraw the comment, please.

**Mr. Ted Chudleigh:** Ask the Premier to withdraw.

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Would the member please withdraw the comment?

**Mr. Ted Chudleigh:** I withdraw.

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Thank you.

**Mr. Ted Chudleigh:** Your partisan slip is showing, Speaker.

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** I'll just ask the member to make his comments to the House. We can have a chat later about some of your comments. I'd be very happy to do so, because I'm very conscious of the role that I play within this chamber.

**Mr. Ted Chudleigh:** There are 107 equal members of this House.

*Interjection.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Stop the clock. I would just ask the Minister of Revenue to withdraw the comment that you just made. Don't provoke the members one way or the other.

**Hon. Monique M. Smith:** I withdraw.

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Thank you.

**Mr. Ted Chudleigh:** Thank you, Speaker. I'm easily provoked.

This junket is being planned at a time when the federal government and even the mayor of Toronto are promising to put serious diplomatic pressure on China regarding human rights.

Yesterday, the Premier washed his hands of foreign obligations, saying that he simply follows the lead of the federal government. On the other hand, he stated the importance of a policy of engagement with China. The Premier can't have it both ways.

However, given the current oppression of Tibetans, a friendly ribbon cutting is not all that opportune. If that is the case, will the minister protect Ontario's and Canada's international reputation and cancel her tactless and irresponsible junket immediately?

**Hon. Sandra Pupatello:** I think the Premier of Ontario made it very clear. My ministry is in constant and regular contact with the federal minister responsible for this area—in particular, confirming that the federal government's position is around constructive engagement with many parts of the world, including China. Constructive engagement includes economic development activity and business opportunities for Ontario, and that's what we're doing.

As I mentioned publicly yesterday in here, I would say that there will be much opportunity to have interaction, both in a public forum and in a private forum. The conversations that ensue, I will tell you, will cover a whole range of topics, not just business development, as has already been the case this month.

I will say again that we have been more than forthcoming with information, and I do think that it's the responsibility of the member asking the question to check with his leader's office as to the kind of communication that we have been very forthcoming with.

## WORKPLACE SAFETY

**Mr. Paul Miller:** I'd like to direct my question to the Premier. Premier, Gordie Heffern died in 2001 from injuries he suffered in an explosion at a Sudbury nickel refinery. His employer was prosecuted by the labour ministry and fined \$375,000. In the year after the incident and the year the fine was levied, the same company received rebates from the WSIB totalling \$5 million, far exceeding the fine.

Steve Mahoney, chair of the WSIB, is quoted in the April 7 issue of Metro News as saying, "I didn't realize that we were paying out those kinds of bonuses to companies that are breaking the law."

Minister, Steve Mahoney should have known; the WSIB should have known.

Will the Premier ask for the immediate resignation of Mr. Mahoney and the WSIB?

**Hon. Dalton McGuinty:** To the Minister of Labour.

**Hon. Brad Duguid:** The answer clearly is no, of course not. Mr. Mahoney is doing an excellent job at the WSIB.

We just have to look at what has happened with the WSIB over the last four or five years, Mr. Speaker—and



I look to you as a predecessor and Mr. Bentley as a predecessor. This government set a very ambitious goal at the time, and many people said we'd never be able to meet it, of a 20% reduction in workplace injuries. That's where it counts. That's where it matters.

Mr. Mahoney has been a leader in helping this government and working with this government, along with health and safety committees across this province, along with injured worker advocates across this province, along with employers across this province, to reduce workplace injuries significantly right across this province, and we're well on the way to reaching our goal of a 20% reduction. He has done a good job.

**Mr. Paul Miller:** To the minister: The outrageous rebates that went to Gordie Heffern's employer following his tragic death flow from a flawed WSIB program called "experience rating." For years, the labour movement and we in the NDP have been calling for an end to this perverse employer incentive, but neither the government nor the WSIB bothered to listen to us. Mr. Mahoney must go, the WSIB must go, and experience rating must go. Employers see experience rating as a profit centre. Will the minister end experience rating immediately, will the minister remove the WSIB, and will the minister begin the process of establishing a WSIB truly representative of the interests of all Ontarians, not just employers?

**Hon. Brad Duguid:** Our priority is to reduce workplace injuries. Our priority is to make workplaces across this province healthier and safer for our workers, and we're doing that in a number of ways. We're doing that through enforcement: 200 additional health and safety inspectors out across this province in workplaces, making our workplaces safer.

We're also doing it in a more targeted enforcement process, which is working. We're well on the way to our goal of a 20% reduction. We have acknowledged that the incentive program, the experience rating program, needs to be improved, and that's why Mr. Mahoney and the WSIB are engaged in a review at the moment and will be reporting back, and we look forward to hearing their recommendations.

We acknowledge it can be improved, and we look forward to working with the WSIB and all stakeholders in this particular area to ensure we do the best we can to make workplaces across this province as safe as we possibly can.

#### TOBACCO CONTROL

**Mr. Shafiq Qaadri:** My question is for the Minister of Health Promotion, the Honourable Margaret Best. As a physician, I know that smoking, from a medical perspective, is a universal evil, accelerating and aggravating heart disease, high blood pressure and other cardiovascular diseases, which are still Canada's number one killer.

I also know that quitting smoking is an extraordinary challenge. The temptation to smoke again can be overwhelming. Many of my constituents have expressed the

challenge they face every day as they walk into a convenience store and confront the power wall in the retail industry. These displays test their resolve to quit and of course have the potential of provoking someone to start smoking once again.

Minister, would you tell this House how the McGuinty government plans to help reduce impulse buying of tobacco?

**Hon. Margaret R. Best:** I would like to thank the member from Etobicoke North for his question. Effective May 31 of this year, the retail display of tobacco will be banned across the province of Ontario. Smoking kills 13,000 Ontarians every year and costs our health care system \$1.6 billion. It is also the number one preventable cause of death in Ontario. Our tobacco display ban will reduce impulse buying, especially among youth. Our government believes that putting cigarettes next to candy bars sends the wrong message. We are moving forward to ensure that the next generation of Ontarians does not pick up the habit of smoking.

**Mr. Shafiq Qaadri:** Minister, as you will be aware, there have been several reports lately regarding the display ban. Local store owners and vendors in my own riding of Etobicoke North are concerned about meeting the requirements of this ban. Minister, will you be able to inform this House about the ministry's initiatives on this issue and what small business owners can expect going forward?

**Hon. Margaret R. Best:** The implementation of our display ban relies on working together in partnerships, educating vendors and ultimately promoting the health of Ontarians.

We are reliant on strong partnerships to achieve our goals. My ministry officials have been in regular discussions with the Ontario Convenience Stores Association and the Ontario Korean Businessmen's Association. In addition, public health officials have conducted thousands of educational visits and are also distributing 30,000 educational kits to vendors across Ontario.

As with any new legislation, we recognize the challenges faced by those most affected. We are working with all partners to ensure a smooth implementation. However, let us not forget the focus of the display ban is about promoting the health and well-being of Ontarians.

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#### POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

**Mr. Jim Wilson:** My question is for the Premier. Premier, as you know, representatives of the Ontario Confederation of University Faculty Associations are visiting Queen's Park today. Professor Brian Brown, the president of the association, is in the gallery along with his colleagues, and they would like to know, along with many, many student groups in the province, why, after four and a half years of your government, Ontario is dead last in per capita student university funding—still last—and why we have the worst or the highest student-faculty ratios in Canada.



You made a big deal in your budget about building classrooms, but what's the sense in having more classrooms if we don't have enough professors to fill those classrooms and give our students a proper quality university education?

**Hon. Dalton McGuinty:** To the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities.

**Hon. John Milloy:** I want to begin by recognizing and welcoming the representatives of OCUFA here today.

I thank the honourable member for his question. It gives me a chance to remind this House that under the leadership of our Premier, we brought forward the Reaching Higher plan: \$6.2 billion, the largest investment in post-secondary education in this province's history. I think it's worth looking at some of the results, as we just passed the midway point of Reaching Higher.

We have 100,000 additional students in colleges and universities since 2003. We have the highest post-secondary participation rate in Ontario history. We've added \$1.5 billion for student assistance. I find it passing strange that a member of that party that cut funding to post-secondary institutions, that cut student aid and increased tuition, would stand up and ask—

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Supplementary.

**Mr. Jim Wilson:** In 1999, the Premier—and I have a photo of it here—signed the following pledge. It says, "Ontario needs a strong, properly funded and affordable public university system to take us into the 21st century. I therefore promise to raise the operating grants per person for Ontario universities to the national average during my next term in government." So that would have been between 2003 and the last election, in October.

I'm glad the Premier doesn't sign our paycheques around here, because the signature isn't worth the paper it's written on. You talk about the money you're putting into universities and into post-secondary education. You call it the Reaching Higher campaign. It's really reaching for the bottom. We're dead last again in Canada, 10th out of 10 in terms of funding. We have the highest and worst student-faculty ratios. Some 5,500 new full-time professors need to be hired today just to keep up with the increasing enrolments that you're bragging about. When are you going to do something about it?

**Hon. John Milloy:** As I say, I find it very passing strange that a member from that party would have the gall to stand up—let me give you some facts. The Conservatives cut aid to students by 50%. They allowed undergraduate tuition in this province to increase by 71%. And in terms of their first two years in office, they cut \$435 million from our colleges and universities.

Not only have we brought forward the Reaching Higher plan, but our most recent budget contained more good news for Ontario's universities and colleges: \$465 million for Ontario's college and university students for their direct assistance, as well as \$970 million to help renew and build new facilities across the province. I'm proud of the leadership shown by our Premier on post-secondary education and I look forward to continuing to work with the sector.

## NURSES

**M<sup>me</sup> France Gélinas:** Ma question est pour le ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée.

Acknowledging how nursing layoffs directly affect patient care, Doris Grinspun of the Registered Nurses Association of Ontario, RNAO, says, "You don't solve an issue as serious as this by cutting the number of RNs on staff. You do the opposite."

People in Ontario are worried. Why does the minister see nursing layoffs as a simple fact of life?

**Hon. George Smitherman:** I would want the honourable member to be reminded that there was a time when her party was in government and they closed several thousand hospital beds, resulting in the loss of thousands and thousands of nursing positions. That's when Howard Hampton was on a five-year bathroom break.

But I do think that the question at hand is a very, very important one. That's why we've been working so hard to add nurses.

With respect to Rouge Valley, where there has been a lot of speculation in the media, no nurse has lost their position there. I'm working with all those nursing leaders and with the individuals who run our health care system to protect the nursing envelope. I would encourage the honourable member to separate herself from the speculation and to get down to the real facts. If she has the name of a nurse from Rouge Valley who has been laid off, I'd ask her to bring me that name. I don't think that she can find such a name, because it hasn't occurred.

Let's separate the speculation from the reality and let's all agree that nurses are the heart and soul of health care.

**M<sup>me</sup> France Gélinas:** Ce qui arrive à Rouge Valley, c'est vraiment juste la pointe de l'iceberg. Il y a 75 autres hôpitaux en Ontario qui sont dans exactement la même position : ils vont faire face à un déficit.

Even though it's clear that nursing layoffs directly affect patient care, is the minister telling the 75 other hospitals that the best way to balance the books is to let nursing positions go vacant so that they can be eliminated?

**Hon. George Smitherman:** No. Quite to the contrary. As evidenced even by the statistics that the member's leader relied upon yesterday, nursing employment in Ontario is up very substantially. Over the next four years, we have 17.55 million annual hours of additional care that will be provided by nurses in the province. We've completed a new nursing graduate guarantee.

We believe that Ontario's nurses are vital to the delivery of health care. That's why every single hospital in Ontario under our watch has received more money each and every year, as they will this year, and why I think it's important that the honourable member separate herself from the speculation about what might happen and focus more specifically on what has occurred. Like I said in my first answer, if she does have the name of a nurse who was laid off at Rouge Valley related to these stories that she's speculating about, please bring that



forward. I don't think it has happened, and I'm working hard to make sure that it doesn't.

### CENTRE FOR RESEARCH AND INNOVATION

**Mr. Bill Mauro:** My question is to the Minister of Research and Innovation. Northern Ontario and my riding of Thunder Bay–Atikokan are well-positioned to move into the knowledge-based economy with well-respected educational facilities, such as Lakehead University and Confederation College, and an abundance of natural resources.

It was great news that our government, in our recent budget, is fulfilling a commitment by providing \$25 million to make Thunder Bay the new home for the Centre for Research and Innovation in the bioeconomy. Minister, can you outline the significance of this centre and the bioeconomy for Thunder Bay and northwestern Ontario?

**Hon. John Wilkinson:** The world's dependence on non-renewable carbon is creating global challenges as we see supplies dwindle, prices continue to rise, and the environment negatively impacted.

To face this challenge, we must find high-quality renewable sources of carbon to meet the global demand. Progressive industries and communities across this province want to seize that global opportunity.

I want to thank my friend the member for Thunder Bay–Atikokan, particularly for his tireless advocacy for this new centre, and my colleagues the Minister of Northern Development and Mines and the Minister of Natural Resources, for inspiring us with this tremendous vision.

I'm proud that our government wants to serve as a catalyst, play a catalytic role, in the great community of Thunder Bay for the creation of this new centre, and I look forward to visiting the member in his hometown next month.

Thunder Bay has all the key ingredients to make this a success. It's home to world-class academic facilities, an abundance of natural resources, and a deep knowledge of the forestry industry.

**Mr. Bill Mauro:** Thank you, Minister. This investment is great news for Thunder Bay and the region. It will help to diversify our economy and build on areas of strength, creating jobs and bringing innovative ideas to the north. This partnership between academia, industry and our government will help provide solutions for local industry and leverage the largest possible investment in the community.

*Interjection.*

**Mr. Bill Mauro:** As usual, good news for the north is bad news for the NDP.

Can you please outline the economic benefits this investment will bring?

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**Hon. John Wilkinson:** Researchers and innovators alike will look at the application of bioproducts in the 21st century. There are many new areas, including medi-

cinal compounds, cellulosic ethanol, new industrial products, biomass conversion and the recovery of high-value molecules from our great legacy, the boreal forest.

The centre, I believe, will attract even more world-class researchers and students, as well as a wide array of industry and other investments to Thunder Bay and northern Ontario. Thunder Bay is well positioned to partner with other parts of the bioeconomy that are contained right here in Ontario through a network. I would mention Sarnia's bioindustrial centre, the University of Toronto's Centre for Biocomposites, Western's research into agricultural fuels and bioprocessing, the University of Guelph's Centre for Bioproduct Discovery and Development, and, I say to my friend from St. Catharines, also the wonderful work being done at Brock. There is a new vision in the 21st century. The heart—

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** New question.

### HEALTH PREMIUMS

**Mr. Tim Hudak:** A question to the Premier: Premier, when discussing with the media the upcoming statutory review of the so-called health tax, you said, "We're mandated by law to review that health tax and we will do that." But then, disappointedly, you said, "I think the outcome is pretty predictable."

A cynic might say that this review is nothing but a sham and that the Liberal MPPs will be whipped to support the existing health tax at all costs. Others might say that the Premier will actually keep an open mind. I want to give the Premier the benefit of the doubt and ask the Premier what changes to the health tax, if any, he would contemplate.

**Hon. Dalton McGuinty:** This would be in the category of the "cut" question. What we're talking about is a premium that now raises some \$3 billion annually that we apply directly to investment in health care in Ontario. Since 2003, we've increased funding by \$11.1 billion; \$3 billion of that is derived from this specific health premium. With that premium, we've been able to invest in things like more doctors and more nurses and shorter wait times. We're covering new treatments. We're going to cover the PSA test, new vaccinations for children and the like.

We had a very important conversation around the health premium at the time of the recent election. I think Ontarians spoke unequivocally on this particular issue. They want us to continue to support their health care, to invest in their health care and to ensure it's there for them when they need it. We will continue to do that.

**Mr. Tim Hudak:** I don't know if I got an answer to the direct question: Is the committee process another Dalton McGuinty sham or will it be an honest process to review the health tax?

Premier, it was four years ago this month that you appeared on Global Television and said, "I am very clear about this. We're not going to be raising taxes." That was on April 24, 2004, and sadly, as we know, three weeks later you dropped the bomb of an up-to-\$900 tax increase



on working families and seniors. You know the problem. You have some \$5 billion in excess revenue that you shovelled out the door. You know that your so-called health tax is extremely regressive. You know it flows into general revenue and not into health care, and you know that by inaccurately and purposely calling it a premium, you've gotten into a lot of trouble with collective bargaining agreements.

I'll ask you again, Premier: In this review process, what kind of changes, large or small, will you contemplate, or is it nothing more than another Dalton McGuinty scam?

**Hon. Dalton McGuinty:** I'll leave it to the committee and its wisdom to arrive at its decisions and draw any important conclusions. But I can say that this was a very controversial increase in government revenues. It was well talked about for a number of years, including during the course of the recent election campaign. We had the opportunity, all of us, on all sides of the House, to talk to Ontarians directly about this very important issue. They had the opportunity to choose that party and, by so doing, to eliminate our health premium. They chose not to do so.

It's interesting that the member opposite has written to us, asking us to provide \$1 million in one-time funding for a hospice in his riding. I'm not familiar with the hospice, but undoubtedly, it is a good organization doing good work for families in his riding. That's just one of countless demands we receive for limited dollars and that's why we continue to support our premium.

### EMPLOYMENT LANDS

**Mr. Peter Tabuns:** My question is to the Premier. Premier, SmartCentres is proposing a large-scale retail development on Eastern Avenue in my riding of Toronto-Danforth. Both the city of Toronto and east Toronto residents are concerned because significant film employment lands will be lost to retail development. Premier, will you listen to Mayor David Miller and east Toronto residents? Will you announce today that the province is declaring a provincial interest at the May 20 OMB hearing regarding the zoning of these lands? Will you make that declaration?

**Hon. Dalton McGuinty:** To the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

**Hon. Jim Watson:** It's interesting that the honourable member, who I believe represents that area, is just now asking a question. He has yet to write to me, yet to deal with this in a public forum.

But I can say that the matter is before the Ontario Municipal Board. The Ontario Municipal Board, as the member knows, is an independent, quasi-judicial body. It would be entirely inappropriate for me as the minister to comment on a matter that is before the OMB. It's quite clear that the honourable member should be aware of the fact that ministers should not and do not interfere and intervene with OMB matters, and I won't.

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Supplementary. The member for Beaches-East York.

**Mr. Michael Prue:** Back to the minister, yes, the OMB—

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Stop the clock. This is the Minister of Health's last warning.

**Mr. Michael Prue:** Back to the minister, yes, it's absolutely true that this matter is before the Ontario Municipal Board, but it's also absolutely true that your government promised to reform the Ontario Municipal Board and yet developers are still bypassing the city of Toronto planning process and heading straight to that body.

The McGuinty government's growth plan promised big changes around protecting employment lands within urban centres, yet in this case SmartCentres' proposal on Eastern Avenue is easily able to bypass it.

So my question to the minister: Will you declare a provincial interest at the OMB hearing, simply saying that this province doesn't want this kind of action, on or before May 20, or are more employment lands such as these to be lost to the city of Toronto?

**Hon. Jim Watson:** Well, as usual the NDP are late to the party and they're scrambling. But I repeat the same answer I gave to the honourable member. This is a matter that is before the OMB. Perhaps the NDP may think it's appropriate that a minister of the crown intervene in a matter before the OMB. But we have made significant changes to the planning process. I commend my predecessor, the current Minister of the Environment. One of the things I'm most proud of, for instance, is that we have engaged a citizen liaison office that helps citizens understand the appeal process and how they can participate. We've made it more user-friendly for individuals and community groups to make appeals to the OMB. We're proud of those reforms, and we're proud of the work that we have done. But again, on the specific case that the member has raised, it is before the OMB, and it is completely inappropriate for the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing to offer comment or intervene in the situation.

### ESL FUNDING

**Mr. Charles Sousa:** My question is to the Minister of Education. Minister, as you may know, my riding of Mississauga South has a high proportion of students with ESL needs.

I think we in this House would all agree that helping newcomers adjust to life in Ontario is crucial to our continued success. Many of these newcomers do not speak English as their first language. There's no better time for people to learn a new language than in their younger years.

Mr. Speaker, through you to the minister, will the minister tell us what supports are available to these students?



**Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne:** Thank you to the member for his support of kids in his community and especially kids of new immigrant families.

Since we came to office, we have increased English-as-a-second-language funding by 15%—\$64 million. We've committed to \$40 million over the next four years, \$10 million in next year's education funding formula alone. We have extended ESL support to four years. When we came into office it was three-year support, so we've expanded that. These investments and changes have meant that ESL students are improving their academic achievement. Grade 3 ESL results have improved by 18% since 2002-03, and grade 6 ESL results have improved by 15 percentage points since we came into office.

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**Mr. Charles Sousa:** The minister should know that many of my constituents are concerned. ESL students may not be getting the full program support they need. I have heard that in some cases, supports for ESL students do not in fact reach those students. Would the minister tell us what she is doing to address this?

**Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne:** When we came into office, one of the things that boards had to do was take money from one grant to put it into another, because the funding formula had not been fixed by the previous government. We've been changing the formula every year to enhance those grants so that the money that goes to the boards can go where it needs to go. We've put a new policy in place which next year will require boards to tell us where those ESL dollars are being spent, and the following year boards will be required to report publicly exactly where those ESL dollars are going, what programs they are spending the money on and the efficacy of those programs.

This is the first time that there's been a kindergarten-to-grade-12 ESL policy in place, and that means we will know exactly where those dollars are flowing.

### SCHOOL CLOSURES

**Mrs. Joyce Savoline:** To the Premier on education: On August 14, 2007, the Premier stated, "Our commitment of \$309 million over the next two years signals our dedication to public education and puts school boards on firm financial ground." On September 18, 2007, the Premier said, "For rural kids, few things are more important than being able to go to school in your own community with your own friends. Rural schools help keep strong communities, which is why"—and I want to stress this part—"we're not only committed to keeping them open, but we're strengthening them."

Given your commitment to rural students and their families, will you fund these promises to have these rural schools like Phelps Central School stay open and keep them from unreasonable closures?

**Hon. Dalton McGuinty:** To the Minister of Education.

**Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne:** It is absolutely true that we as a government have done everything we can to support those rural schools.

*Applause.*

**Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne:** Thank you, guys.

Since 2003, we've put \$465 million in place to adjust for declining enrolment. What we have to recognize is that next year there will be 90,000 fewer students in our schools than when we came into office in 2003. It is absolutely imperative that school boards have the flexibility and the ability to make decisions about consolidating schools or school closures, if they need to do that. That's why we put pupil accommodation review guidelines in place. The boards were asking for those so that they could make rational decisions about their capital plans and how to move forward locally.

## PETITIONS

### SCHOOL CLOSURES

**Mr. Norman W. Sterling:** "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board has proposed the closure of Fitzroy Centennial Public School as of September 2009; and

"It is the general consensus of the parents and communities involved that this decision was based on a flawed, biased process using inaccurate statistics and estimates; and

"It is felt that closing three rural schools in three years to create one mega-school is not in the best interests of the students involved. Constant shuffling of students because of school closures results in lack of stability and security.... There will no longer be an option available for those who fare better in a smaller, more community-oriented learning environment; and

"Closing rural schools is one of the first steps to destroying the agricultural culture and fabric of our rural area. The rural culture will be greatly diluted once these students are absorbed into a school with a much larger 'urbanized' population; and

"The existing funding formula rewards larger schools with larger populations with resources, teachers and programs and smaller schools to failure and eventual closure;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To halt the closure of Fitzroy Centennial Public School;

"To review the process upon which the decisions of the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board were based regarding this proposed closure;

"To halt the trend towards closure of rural schools, in general, and to consider the detrimental effect on our rural community and the future of our agricultural-based industries; and

"To review the existing funding formula, which essentially dooms smaller, rural schools."

This has been signed by 350 people in the Fitzroy community, and I've signed it.

### HOME CARE

**M<sup>me</sup> France Gélinas:** I have a petition from SEIU and the people of Windsor.

"Whereas the Ontario government has continued the practice of competitive bidding for home care services; and

"Whereas the competitive bidding process has increased the privatization of Ontario's health care delivery, in direct violation of the Commitment to the Future of Medicare Act, 2004; and

"Whereas competitive bidding for home care services has decreased both the continuity and quality of care available to home care clients; and

"Whereas home care workers do not enjoy the same employment rights, such as successor rights, as all other Ontario workers have, which deprives them of termination rights, seniority rights and the right to move with their work when their employer agency loses a contract;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"We call on the government of Ontario:

"(1) to immediately stop the competitive bidding for home care services so home care clients can receive the continuity and quality of care they deserve; and

"(2) to extend successor rights under the Labour Relations Act to home care workers to ensure the home care sector is able to retain a workforce that is responsive to clients' needs."

I support this petition. I will affix my name to it and give it to page Bethany.

### HOSPITAL FUNDING

**Mr. Joe Dickson:** I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario from the people of Ajax and Pickering.

"Whereas the Central East local health integration network board of directors has approved the Rouge Valley Health System's deficit elimination plan, subject to public meetings; and

"Whereas, despite the significant expansion of the Ajax-Pickering hospital, its largest in its 53-year history, a project that could reach \$100 million, of which 90% is funded by the Ontario government, this plan now calls for the ill-advised transfer of 20 mental health unit beds from Ajax-Pickering hospital to the Centenary health centre in Scarborough; and

"Whereas one of the factors for the successful treatment of patients in the mental health unit is support from family and friends, and the distance to Centenary health centre would negatively impact on the quality care for residents of Ajax and Pickering; and

"Whereas it is also imperative for Rouge Valley Health System to balance its budget, eliminate its deficit and debt and realize the benefits of additional Ontario government funding;

"We, the undersigned, therefore petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Rouge Valley Health System continue to provide the current level of service to our Ajax-Pickering hospital, which now serves the fastest-growing communities of west Durham; and

"That the Ajax-Pickering hospital retain the badly needed 20-bed mental health unit."

I would sign and affix my name to that.

### LORD'S PRAYER

**Mr. John O'Toole:** I was pleased to attend a Trillium presentation at Port Perry/Prince Albert Pastoral Charge a couple of weeks ago, and the administrator, Pat Bird, presented me with a series of petitions. The charge had taken a vote and agreed to sign the petition, which reads as follows:

"Whereas the current Liberal government is proposing to eliminate the Lord's Prayer from its" rightful "place at the beginning of daily proceedings in the Legislature; and

"Whereas the recitation of the Lord's Prayer has opened the Legislature every day since the 19th century; and

"Whereas the Lord's Prayer's message of forgiveness and the avoidance of evil is universal to the human condition; it is a valuable guide and lesson for a chamber that is too often an arena of conflict; and

"Whereas recognizing the diversity of the people of Ontario should be an inclusive process, not one which excludes traditions such as the Lord's Prayer;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, ask the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to preserve the daily recitation of the Lord's Prayer by the Speaker in the Legislature"—as has been done since the 19th century.

I'm pleased to present this petition and give it to Rheanna, one of the new pages in the Ontario Legislature.

1510

### FEDERAL-PROVINCIAL FISCAL POLICIES

**Mr. Tony Ruprecht:** I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, and it has to do with fairness for Ontario workers' employment insurance. It reads as follows:

"Whereas, even though job creation in Ontario is far outpacing job loss, one lost job is one too many; and

"Whereas last year the average unemployed worker in Ontario received \$5,110 in regular EI benefits while the average unemployed person in the rest of Canada received \$9,070; and

"Whereas, on average, the federal government provides an unemployed worker in Ontario with \$684 less



for job training than it provides for an unemployed worker in another province; and

"Whereas fair funding could mean additional investments in important areas such as enhanced apprenticeship programs, labour market integration for new immigrants, and skills training for older workers; and

"Whereas Ontario workers deserve the same opportunities as other Canadians to improve their skills, find meaningful work, contribute to Canada's prosperity and support their families;

"We, the undersigned, therefore petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to press the federal government to be fair to Ontario workers by providing equal funding for employment insurance benefits and job training compared to other provinces."

Since I agree with this petition 100%, I'm delighted to sign it.

#### LORD'S PRAYER

**Mr. Jim Wilson:** This petition was sent to me by Mr. J. Currie Philips from Elmvale, and I thank him.

"Whereas Premier Dalton McGuinty has called on the Ontario Legislature to consider removing the Lord's Prayer from its daily proceedings; and

"Whereas the Lord's Prayer has been an integral part of our parliamentary heritage that was first established in 1793 under Lieutenant Governor John Graves Simcoe; and

"Whereas the Lord's Prayer is today a significant part of the religious heritage of millions of Ontarians of culturally diverse backgrounds;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to continue its long-standing practice of using the Lord's Prayer as part of its daily proceedings."

I agree with that petition and I've signed it.

#### DISABLED PERSONS PARKING PERMIT PROGRAM

**Mr. Michael A. Brown:** I have a petition that was circulated by the Bikers Rights Organization, Spanish River region number 29.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas there currently exist problems of exposure to theft and the weather when displaying a disabled person parking permit on a motorcycle while parked in a disabled parking space;

"We, the undersigned, petition our members of Parliament to promote the development of a special, fixed permit as proposed by the Bikers Rights Organization, for use by disabled persons who ride or are passengers on motorcycles, even if that requires an amendment to the Highway Traffic Act."

This is signed by Ontarians from one end of the province to the other. I will happily affix my signature.

#### LORD'S PRAYER

**Mr. John Yakabuski:** I thank Rev. Brian Sharpe and the members of the congregation of Renfrew Presbyterian Church for this petition.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the current Liberal government is proposing to eliminate the Lord's Prayer from its place at the beginning of daily proceedings in the Legislature; and

"Whereas the recitation of the Lord's Prayer has opened the Legislature every day since the 19th century; and

"Whereas the Lord's Prayer's message of forgiveness and the avoidance of evil is universal to the human condition; it is a valuable guide and lesson for a chamber that is too often an arena of conflict; and

"Whereas recognizing the diversity of the people of Ontario should be an inclusive process, not one which excludes traditions such as the Lord's Prayer;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, ask the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to preserve the daily recitation of the Lord's Prayer by the Speaker in the Legislature."

I support this petition and affix my signature and send it with Ida.

#### HOSPITAL FUNDING

**Mr. Joe Dickson:** I have a petition for the Legislative Assembly of Ontario from the residents of Ajax and north Pickering.

"Whereas the Central East local health integration network board of directors has approved the Rouge Valley Health System's deficit elimination plan, subject to public meetings; and

"Whereas it is important to ensure that the new birthing unit at Centenary hospital, a \$20-million expansion that will see 16 new labour, delivery, recovery and postpartum birthing rooms and an additional 21 postpartum rooms added by October 2008, will not cause any decline in the pediatric services currently provided at the Ajax-Pickering hospital; and

"Whereas the significant expansion of the Ajax-Pickering hospital, the largest in its 53-year history, a project that could reach \$100 million, of which 90% is funded by the Ontario government—it is important to continue to have a complete maternity unit at the Ajax hospital; and

"Whereas it is also imperative for the Rouge Valley Health System to balance its budget, eliminate its deficit and debt and realize the benefits of additional Ontario government funding; and

"Whereas the parents of Ajax and Pickering deserve the right to have their children born in their own community, where they have chosen to live and work;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Rouge Valley Health System continue to provide the current level of service; and

"That our Ajax-Pickering hospital now serves the fastest-growing communities of west Durham; and

"That the Ajax-Pickering hospital retain its full maternity ward."

I will attach my signature to that petition.

### GYPSY MOTHS

**Mr. Toby Barrett:** I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. It's titled Stop the Spread of Gypsy Moths.

"Whereas gypsy moths pose a dangerous threat to our forests in Norfolk county and across the province of Ontario; and

"Whereas many properties in Norfolk and Haldimand counties have been deforested and dramatically harmed by gypsy moths; and

"Whereas the province of Ontario has previously funded a cost-shared gypsy moth spraying program;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That Ontario's Ministry of Natural Resources immediately fund a gypsy moth spraying program to assist landowners and municipalities attempting to control further gypsy moth infestation."

The signatures come from Cayuga, Caledonia, Hagersville, Turkey Point, Waterford, Simcoe and Victoria.

### ANTI-SMOKING LEGISLATION

**Mrs. Laura Albanese:** I have a petition signed by the students of Chaminade College School in York South-Weston.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas children exposed to second-hand smoke are at a higher risk for respiratory illnesses including asthma, bronchitis and pneumonia, as well as sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS) and increased incidences of cancer and heart disease in adulthood; and

"Whereas the Ontario Medical Association supports a ban on smoking in vehicles when children are present, as they have concluded that levels of second-hand smoke can be 23 times more concentrated in a vehicle than in a house because circulation is restricted within a small space; and

"Whereas the Ipsos Reid poll conducted on behalf of the Ontario Tobacco-Free Network indicates that eight in 10 (80%) of Ontarians support 'legislation that would ban smoking in cars and other private vehicles where a child or adolescent under 16 years of age is present'; and

"Whereas Nova Scotia, California, Puerto Rico, and South Australia recently joined several jurisdictions of the United States of America in banning smoking in vehicles carrying children;

"We, the undersigned ... respectfully petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to approve Bill 11 and amend the Smoke-Free Ontario Act to ban smoking in vehicles carrying children 16 years of age and under."

I want to thank the students of Chaminade College School for their hard work in furnishing this petition to me. I sign it and support it, and I will give it to page Michael.

### ORDERS OF THE DAY

#### ONTARIO HEALTH PREMIUM

Resuming the debate adjourned on April 8, 2008, on a motion that the standing committee on finance and economic affairs, as constituted by the assembly, review the Ontario health premium in accordance with section 29.2 of the Income Tax Act.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath):** Further debate?

**Mr. Toby Barrett:** With respect to government order number 6, I do welcome the opportunity to debate this Ontario Liberal motion to review the so-called health tax. This will be reviewed by the standing committee on finance and economic affairs.

With respect to this health tax, it's an income tax increase. It was brought in by the present Liberal government in their first budget, back in 2004. At that time, it was the largest tax increase in the history of Ontario.

1520

Our finance critic, the member for Niagara West—Glanbrook, did an opening speech yesterday, and he referred to Bill 106. Bill 106 was the 2004 budget bill, and I think it is important, as we review this particular income tax increase, as required by this legislation, as we evaluate this budget increase, that we look at the history of how this came about. We can learn from the past. It's very important to take a look at the inception of this particular tax-increase boondoggle.

To debate this motion as well, we have to think back to the election that occurred a few months before that 2004 budget. During the course of that 2003 election campaign, Mr. McGuinty said definitely, "I will not raise taxes on Ontario families." That was the election before this big tax was brought in. He was quoted on CFRB, for example, as saying, "I won't raise taxes one cent on Ontario families." They claim they had a four-year fully costed plan, and this was independently costed by a number of individuals. At that time, the Liberal opposition claimed that even if the deficit was as high as \$3 billion, they could eliminate it "like that," to use their quote.

Then they introduced this budget in 2004—the 2004-05 budget. They called it a plan for change. Really, it's all about how they changed their plan. They obviously had changed their minds. During the introduction of that budget, there was a scrum held right afterwards, and in that scrum the then Minister of Finance, Greg Sorbara, went before the media. Greg Sorbara became known as—of GST fame, essentially a GST stance for the Greg Sorbara tax, which we are at present reviewing and evaluating. He was asked by a reporter why they promised one



thing and did another thing right after the election. Here's what he said: "It's the realities of the work that we do. It reminds me of a former Prime Minister," referring to Pierre Trudeau, who promised not to introduce wage and price controls before the election and then after the election, he said, and I quote Mr. Sorbara, "Zap, you're frozen." After the 2003 election and right after this 2004 budget, I guess we can say, "Zap, you're taxed."

Most of us, I would assume, teach our children that you shouldn't make promises you can't keep. Back in 2003-04, there was already the perception that this government could not be trusted to keep its word; that they were not doing after the 2003 election what they promised to do before that election. The reality is that in the perception of an overwhelming majority of people in Ontario, that's what we're left with to this day. Unfortunately, I feel for this government that the 2004 budget did nothing but confirm that perception in Ontarians' minds. They now have solidified in their minds that any of us who think about these broken promises and these taxes that arrive, even though we're told there won't be any taxes—essentially we know we just can't trust this gang at Queen's Park who are currently the governing party. They can't be trusted to deliver on any commitments they make or commitments that they don't articulate and then, to our surprise, show up after an election.

I'm afraid that feeling is just as prevalent today in 2008 as it was back in 2004, when the details of that budget were made known. The bottom line is that people did not vote for this health tax that we are now obligated by law to review.

There was a question raised during the outrage after that 2004 budget, when this so-called health tax came in. I'll put the question: "Do all fairy tales begin with 'once upon a time'?" The answer is no. In Premier McGuinty's Ontario, this particular fairy tale begins with the words, "I, Dalton McGuinty, leader of the Liberal Party of Ontario, promise, if my party is elected as the next government, that I will not raise taxes or implement any new taxes without the explicit consent of Ontario voters and will not run deficits. I promise to abide by the Taxpayer Protection and Balanced Budget Act." This was signed by then-Liberal leader McGuinty on September 11, 2003.

Despite this promise, Premier McGuinty fraudulently proceeded to raise taxes and impose new ones without any mention at all of getting the consent of Ontario voters and no mention at all of having a referendum.

We recall then that the electricity bills went up and gas prices went up. The Ontario Liberals introduced a budget that ensured that you and I and the people across this great province had little money left after paying these kinds of bills, putting food on the table and lining government coffers. Quite simply, Dalton McGuinty broke faith with the people of Ontario by hiking taxes when he promised he wouldn't. It's a hard, fast fact. The best way to lose good character is to not keep one's word.

This is not the government that the people of our province believed they were electing back on October 2,

2003. I reiterate: The Liberals promised change; then they changed their minds and we've ended up with these kinds of increased taxes. Again, the most contentious one was the one on health care in the 2004 budget.

One of the hardest pills for people in Ontario to swallow was the introduction of a health care tax, with figures at the time estimating that families would be paying as much as \$1,800 a year in extra taxes. Individuals would be paying somewhere between \$300 to \$900 a year—again, depending on their income. The tax for those earning between \$20,000 and \$36,000 rings in at \$300, representing a 1.5% increase in tax on an individual's income.

We do know that, the way things are going, close to half the Ontario budget is used to fund health services in the province, and therefore, by extrapolation, close to half the taxes we pay already go to the Ontario government to pay for health. We already have that in health taxes. Back in October 2003, I don't think the people of Ontario understood that they were voting for this increase in their income tax, the so-called health tax.

With great fanfare, on September 11, 2003—another disaster day, if you will, of September 11—Dalton McGuinty signed the taxpayers' protection act, promising, in what amounts to about 50 words or so, that he would keep the faith with the bill that he voted for, that he would balance the budget, not raise taxes and keep spending under control; there would be no deficit. He also specifically promised that he would have a referendum and he would let people decide about any tax increase if circumstances should change. No wonder people are cynical.

We wonder why people are cynical about politics and politicians. We wonder why people think they can't trust politicians. Again, I put to this House that it's because of the actions like the one taken by Dalton McGuinty and Greg Sorbara starting back in 2003-04, where they very clearly promised something they couldn't deliver.

1530

Going back a little further, 1996 was the Ontario PCs' first budget. At that time, many people said to me, many people were saying in the province of Ontario, "Very clearly you're doing something you said you would do. You campaigned on what was felt to be a very difficult platform"—and at that time, we were going through very difficult times—"and you're keeping your word." We were re-elected in 1999. It was in large measure because we kept our word, because we kept our promises. We felt people could trust us when we said something. We felt, and people indicated to us, that we would deliver on those promises, for example, with balanced budgets or anything to do with taxes and spending.

Just going back a little further in history, people were frustrated at that time. Many people were unemployed, they were very cynical and they were just coming through a 10-year period under the two previous governments at that time, a 10-year period of tax increases. There were 66 tax increases, if you add them up, over that 10-year period, a period of big-spending government.



At that time, people went so far as to say, "We want each candidate who's running for office to sign a pledge that you'll vote for a bill called the Taxpayer Protection Act"—I signed that pledge—"and to also sign and vote for another bill called the Balanced Budget Act." It wasn't enough just to promise; as a politician, one had to sign on the dotted line and specifically promise to introduce and to support that bill. We passed that particular law in this House in 1999, and every Liberal MPP who showed up for the vote stood in favour of that bill. They said they would live up to it.

I think it is important to explain this, to reiterate this, because we are reviewing this health tax. We are evaluating what went wrong. Members opposite said they would honour their pledge. They said they would keep their faith.

However, we all recall—we all watched on television. I think every single major network replayed those Liberal campaign ads where Dalton McGuinty looked right into the television camera and he said, "I won't raise your taxes." CBC ran a clip of Dalton McGuinty with a big smile as well, signing the taxpayer protection pledge. I recall that the member for Etobicoke-Lakeshore was standing over one shoulder and the then Chair of Management Board, Gerry Phillips, was standing over the other.

In 2004, people in Ontario regrettably soon discovered they were paying more for health care and obviously getting less. With the introduction of that 2004 Ontario budget, Liberals turned their backs on their much-publicized commitment to universal health care, in my view, not only with their regressive two-tier health tax but also with their regressive two-tier listing of a number of vital health services, despite paying lip service to medicare. This Liberal government, as we know, no longer pays for visits with respect to chiropractic, optometry or physiotherapy. Our optometrists, chiropractors, physiotherapists and, most important, their patients have been betrayed by a government that turned its back, for example, on preventive eye care and sentenced people to live with back and muscular pain if they cannot now afford to get the help they need.

Liberals today seem to continue to defend their actions. Their move to delist health services has created a situation where, obviously, health care is being denied to those who do not have the money to pay for it. In my book, that would be described as two-tier health care. It really does fly in the face of any commitment with respect to health promotion, with respect to disease prevention, with respect to any thought of community-based primary health care services.

As the Ontario Chiropractic Association pointed out at that time, in addition to decreasing public access to health care, delisting chiropractic care was a "short-sighted move that would end up costing the health care system far more money than it would save."

Over 1.2 million people in Ontario—obviously, seniors, middle- and low-income earners and their children—depend on chiropractic care for treatment, the kind of

relief that's required for back pain, for neck pain, headaches and other musculoskeletal disorders.

While the government at the time expected to save \$93 million by eliminating chiropractic coverage, the OCA argued, "Additional direct costs from patients accessing physicians, emergency departments and drugs will exceed \$200 million annually."

Similarly, the president of the Ontario Physiotherapy Association said at the time that delisting community-based physiotherapy "will impact particularly on Ontario's most vulnerable populations."

So, again, we are left with that fairy tale, that document, the Taxpayer Protection Act, that was signed by today's Premier. Obviously, his signature is not worth any more than the paper that it was written on at the time.

Our finance critic, in 2004, raised a question in the House to the Premier at the time: "We all know that you had no intention of keeping your campaign promise not to raise taxes. You raised taxes, but you say you were not aware of the \$5.6-billion fiscal risk. But, even after Erik Peters released his report on October 29, 2003, the Premier continued to tell people he would not raise taxes."

On November 1, 2003, on Focus Ontario, the Premier of Ontario said, "... we will not be raising taxes. Families are carrying enough of a burden as it is."

Even with the throne speech, once this government was elected, on November 20, 2003: "We're not going to raise taxes. That's just not on the table."

In a December 18 media scrum, the Premier said, "I don't want to raise taxes. It is not my intention." Again, this was just a few months before the 2004 budget, where he did just that.

On January 14, 2004, when asked point-blank if he would raise taxes, Dalton McGuinty said no.

We're left to question: Why did the Premier break his promises?

Our finance critic at the time mused, "What kind of man is this Premier when he knew full well he had no intention of keeping his promise?" Mr. Hudak said at the time, "Nobody believes a word you say anymore. Dalton McGuinty as Premier promised one thing before the campaign and had no intention of keeping his promise. Even as Premier, he continued to say he would not raise taxes when he knew full well he was going to be raising taxes on middle-class families."

So, there we have it. We are debating government order number 6. It calls for a review and evaluation through legislation, and it's a review that is more than overdue.

1540

**Mr. Peter Tabuns:** The health tax is on the table this afternoon, and it's interesting to see all of the prevarication that's gone on in the past on this matter. The Conservative Party has pointed out that the Premier was not keeping a promise when he brought in this health tax.

What's interesting to me is that not only did he break his promise on that, but the budgets that have flowed from that initial election in 2003 and the budget that has



just come out now don't reflect the commitments of this Premier. When you look at this budget, which supposedly is having a lot of big issues taken care of with this health tax, you see a huge disappointment. If you care about the future of this province, you know the health tax has not actually corrected the fundamental budget problems that we face in a wide variety of areas. We have a do-nothing budget based on a measure that was a broken promise.

If you look at education, the funding formula is not corrected in the budget that this House will be debating. There is no question that English-as-a-second-language funding is at risk because boards of education are under incredible pressure, incredible strains all the time. That lack of investment, those holes that those funds fall into mean real problems for children from new Canadian families. In this province, 48 of 72 boards report that they need to spend more money than they are getting. So in this province, the failure to fix the funding formula, the failure to follow through on a variety of promises, not just this health tax promise, is creating big problems for people in Ontario.

In my city, in Toronto, we have a problem with swimming pools no longer being funded, pools that were paid for by the taxpayer—absolutely necessary to keep our children healthy, fight the obesity epidemic and give them those physical education opportunities. But the Liberals who broke their promise on the health tax have not followed through on their promise to deal with the funding formula. So in my city, people who have spent millions over the years to provide physical education for their youth are not allowed to continue doing that because they're not getting the money they should have with a repaired funding formula. Just like the promise was broken on taxes, the promise has been broken on making sure there's adequate funding for education. The people in Toronto have not been well served. People across this province have not been well served.

The broken promises continue. This Premier has talked before about developing a strong economy in Ontario, just as he said that he would not bring in a health tax. Look at what has happened with culture in this provincial budget. The other day I talked about the fact that what was needed in culture, the investment that was needed, was far beyond anything that was put into this budget. Just as the health tax promise was broken, the promise to take action and make sure that our economy and our cultural sphere were looked after has not been attended to.

The film tax credits in the budget were fought hard for by the film community. Do they have an ongoing life? Are they something they're going to have to fight for all the time? Absolutely they're going to have to fight for them, because they have a defined time limit, up to the end of 2009. The film industry has faced very tough times here in my city and, Madam Speaker, in your city. We need an ongoing film credit for the film community. We don't want them to be in a situation where the Premier again makes a promise that's broken and puts

them into an impossible situation. Why can't they have stability? Why can't they have predictability? Why are they not treated with the respect they deserve to have?

It's not just in the film community, it's in the performing arts. In the budget there's retention of the retail sales tax credit for people who buy tickets for smaller theatres, but that is not adequate to the situation that's faced. Talk to the writers, the performers, the production people in theatre and the performing arts in this city and across this province and the simple reality is they are in incredible financial difficulties. They need assistance. They're not getting it from this government. This government broke its promise on the health tax; it's breaking its promise to take care of Ontario and make sure that it's fully healthy across the spectrum of the economy. Visual artists, authors, the whole creative sector, deserve much better than the very small measures that are incorporated into this budget.

When you look at the environment—and you look at the other promises that were broken by this Premier who promised not to bring in that tax—he promised to take action on climate change. Last summer, he promised a climate change plan and action so that Ontario's emissions would be reduced 6% below the 1990s by 2014; not the Kyoto commitment, weaker than that, but even this new, inadequate commitment is not reflected in this budget. If you look at the actual measures—\$100 million for rehabilitation of social housing units was spun as potentially having a big impact on energy efficiency. Nothing's mandated. It's all vague; it's all general. There was \$30 million allocated over four years to support the northern table on land use planning and resource management to protect a vital carbon sink—no numbers, no specifics. Retail sales tax exemption for qualifying Energy Star household appliances and light bulbs is extended to August 2009. That does not make a climate change plan.

There was \$14 million per year put into the Pick Ontario Freshness strategy and the Ontario's farmers' market initiative. Those are good things, but is that actually going to do what needs to be done when we deal with the vast scope of the climate crisis that's facing our society in this province? This Premier, who broke his promise on the health tax, is breaking his promise on climate change. His approach is an absolute disaster. There's no plan. There's no legislation before us. There's no allocation of money in this budget to actually meet the targets that he's talked about—no detailing; none whatsoever; no meaningful programs.

This is a Premier who spoke about this as one of the moral challenges of our generation, talked about the need to act on climate change so we had something to pass on to our children, to our young people. We have pages here this afternoon who will deal with the full brunt of the climate crisis. The Premier, like me, is a parent. He has to think those long horizons of what's going to happen to our children. Frankly, if you aren't putting money in the budget this year to deal with that issue, then you are



neglecting your obligation to all of our children and to the young people who are here as pages this afternoon.

When you look at the other parts of the environmental spectrum, the other environmental issues that should have been addressed in this budget—in 2007, the Environmental Commissioner stated that the ministries of the environment and natural resources were “starved of funding for core functions,” in real terms operating with fewer resources than in the early 1990s, widespread non-enforcement of environmental regulations and laws—widespread. That’s the reality in Ontario. If you drive 150 kilometres on Highway 401, there’s a good chance you’ll be picked up or charged. If you’re a polluter, your chances of being picked up or charged are far less.

Madam Speaker, you represent an area in Hamilton that has had significant problems with air pollution. Previously, you represented an area farther east. You had constituents who had profound problems with air pollution and a complete lack of enforcement on the part of the Ministry of the Environment. That lack of enforcement, that failure to take action is perpetuated in this do-nothing budget. Another instance in which the Liberal leader, currently Premier, promised action, just like he did on this health tax, promised in that case not to bring in a new tax and he brought it in. He promised to deal with the environment—didn’t deal with it.

The increase in the budget for the Ministry of Natural Resources and the Ministry of the Environment together was a total of 3.2%. That’s extraordinary. The problems we face are huge, and yet, no climate plan, no investment in climate protection and minimal investment in environmental protection.

The budget that is connected to this health tax is a budget that is far below the needs of the people of Ontario, does not reflect our needs today, does not reflect our needs tomorrow, does not reflect the needs of the generation who sits here today before the Speaker.

1550

When we get on to citizenship and immigration, I’ve been in this House now for a little more than two years—not long—but I know that this Liberal government promised to take on the whole question of access to professions, the whole question of recognition of credentials—huge issues.

You talk to people in the Pakistani community, the Bangladeshi community, the Chinese community, Somali, Russian, Bulgarian, Albanian, take your pick—large, large numbers of people who, in this province, have the credentials, the training, the skill, the commitment, the energy and the fire to actually make a difference in this province, using their skills fully. But in fact that isn’t what’s going to happen in this province because, although this government passed an act in its last session called the Fair Access to Regulated Professions Act, that doesn’t solve the problem.

In fact, people in these communities talk to me about the problems they see in their families, in their communities, that have to be dealt with. And what happened in this budget? A 2% reduction for citizenship and immigra-

tion. Does that begin to start dealing with the problems that these communities are facing? Absolutely not.

At least I’ll say this for this government: It’s completely consistent in breaking substantial promises to the people of this province. We know when they make a promise, there’s a very good chance it’s going to be broken. You don’t have to spend a lot of nights lying awake wondering, “Gee, is this going to be different? Are they not going to break this promise?” No, they’ve got a pretty good record.

When it comes to energy, there’s a recommitment in the budget to a \$30-billion investment in nuclear power. Take a look at what’s happening in Finland, where they’re building one of the first new nuclear plants in decades in western Europe, a plant that’s already way behind timeline and way over budget. Look at Florida: A nuclear plant that’s way over budget. This is a government that’s decided to roll the dice with nuclear technology as the future, as the core of the electricity system in Ontario.

This is not a government that’s fiscally prudent. This is not a government that will keep its promises. This is not a government that’s thinking about, “How do we get on to the 21st century? How do we actually develop an economy that reflects the technological developments, that reflects where Germany is going, where Pennsylvania is going, where California is going?” No, this is a province that has decided that the high point of 20th-century technology is good for it, and that’s where this government wants to stay.

Today we have Mr. Wilkinson, minister of innovation, talking about the need to go beyond carbon. And he’s right. If you’re actually going to deal with energy for the future, if you’re going to deal with an industrial economy, you have to do that. But you don’t see that in this budget. What you see in this budget is the status quo.

I have to tell you, Madam Speaker, if you want to commit Ontario to a rust-belt future, you do that. But I know that those who come from industrial cities like yours, the city where I grew up—Hamilton—those people want this province to move into the 21st century, because they want the jobs that come with that sort of advance. They don’t want to stay back in the last century. They want a steel industry that uses all the energy that comes out of making steel so they can make electricity, so they can heat the industrial sector, so they can provide heat for other factories around the steel mills. That’s what makes sense, using 100% of the energy, 95% of the energy, not 30% of the energy.

This Premier and this government are committed to making sure that we are going to have difficulty in the years to come.

When you look at the greater Toronto area, how does the greater Toronto area benefit in this budget—the questions of municipal finance, of uploading of social services, of transit, of sprawl? In fact, just like the broken promise on taxes, we find ourselves in a situation where we’re not getting the action that we need on transit, on sprawl, on municipal finances. There is no uploading of



the services and costs that were dumped on the cities by the Harris regime.

The Premier is perpetuating the actions and the policies that make cities very vulnerable, that make them fragile, that make it difficult for them to provide the social services and the social service safety net that you need for safety, for education and for a high quality of life; it's not coming from this Premier. In the greater Toronto area, those cracks, those fissures, those problems show up on a regular basis in our newspapers. We see the stories of kids getting shot; we hear about children being knifed. We know that as the social infrastructure deteriorates, you get more violence and crime. We have not had that corrected in this budget.

When we look at transit, last year the Premier promised a 17-and-a-half-billion-dollar Move Ontario 20-20 program. There were no specifics. There's nothing here. The Premier has been talking transit, but the real money continues to go to fund new highways and highway expansions. There's an investment of almost twice as much in highways as there is in transit. Ultimately, if we want to breathe clean air, if we want to avoid asthma, if we want to avoid lung disease and if we want to avoid sending billions of dollars every year out of this province to buy oil and gas, we have to have a large-scale, efficient, rational, well-funded transit system. We don't see the action in this budget. What we see is a continuation of the problems that plague the 20th century. They're simply being reproduced in this.

We know that gridlock is causing more and more problems for families. I know that those who live an hour's or two hours' drive from the centre of this city can count on continuing to take long trips home and on being held up in traffic, because until the money is spent on transit, until action is taken to deal with sprawl, that's the way things will continue to go and that's where we're headed in this region.

You know, it's interesting to me, just as an aside, that today, when I raised the question about provincial interest in a development in my riding, a suburbanization of Toronto, the Minister of Municipal Affairs said, "You're a latecomer to this. You're raising questions too late." Well, the minister wouldn't talk to me earlier about this. In fact, this minister, who has the responsibility of making sure that our municipalities work, who should in fact be intervening without us having to ask questions, is throwing up smoke when he is asked questions in the House, refusing to actually talk to people when they come to him, refusing to take on a declaration of provincial interest—which is entirely legitimate. It's entirely legitimate for him to hear about provincial interest and have arguments presented to him. He is simply hiding behind the OMB so that he doesn't have to deal with sprawl, he doesn't have to deal with the bringing of sprawl into the downtown, into the port area, into Toronto's waterfront. His negligence in that area is going to have significant costs for my riding. It will also have significant costs for the GTA and for the film industry in the greater Golden Horseshoe because my area, the area

where this rezoning is going on and the demolition will be going on, is one of the key studio areas for the film industry. His inaction threatens an industry that matters to the whole of the greater Golden Horseshoe and the GTA.

Lastly, I just want to say that this budget does not attend to the huge infrastructure deficit that's faced in the social housing sector. We've had people come to us, as sitting MPPs, talking about crumbling housing—and they're right. Is this budget actually going to deal with that? No. On an absolutely minimal basis, there is a nod to dealing with this issue, but it's not really correcting it. This government has broken its promises on taxes and its promises to take action.

1600

**Mr. David Orazietti:** I'm pleased to join in the discussion this evening on government order number 6.

I want to talk a little bit about the positive benefits in my riding of Sault Ste. Marie of the health premium and the expenditure of additional health resources, certainly across the province and in our community. I also want to take a few minutes to point out a couple of ridings that I have some information on here, opposition member ridings that have received substantial funding through the Ministry of Health, and yet the opposition members come to the House and talk about how we should eliminate the health premium, how we should eliminate \$3 billion in public health spending. So I want to explore that a little bit this evening, and I'd like to know from the opposition members where they would like to see these dollars come from, what part of their ridings, what jobs, what nurses, what hospitals, where they want to see these cuts made, because that's what I'm hearing the opposition members talk about this evening.

Back in 2003, we had a very difficult decision to make, and Ontarians wanted us to reinvest in their vital public services. We had been left a \$5.6-billion deficit from the past government that has been well documented, certainly by the auditor. We faced a tough choice, but we knew that we were making the right choice by adding additional resources to the vital health infrastructure in this province and to the resources of many ridings.

*Interjection.*

**Mr. David Orazietti:** I hear my colleague from Peterborough echoing these sentiments and talking about how important the health investments have been in the riding of Peterborough. I know they have a new hospital under construction—

**Mr. Jeff Leal:** Opening in May.

**Mr. David Orazietti:** —opening in May. The leadership of the member for Peterborough is remarkable, and I know he's a great asset to his community.

Additional funding through the health premium has allowed us to create more physician spaces and hire more nurses. It has meant vaccinations for children who didn't previously get the new vaccines that are provided through public health units across the province. It has meant shorter wait times for hip and knee replacements, MRIs, CT scans, cardiac surgery and cancer surgeries.



We can't afford to take \$3 billion out of our health care system. We have an aging population in Ontario, and increased pressures and demands on our health care system.

I can't imagine for a minute that the opposition members would want to go back to the days in which we were cutting health care funding in the province of Ontario. The former Conservative government closed 28 public hospitals, cut \$557 million from countless budgets of hospitals in the province, closed 7,000 beds, laid off thousands of nurses and cut \$136 million from community public health organizations. The number of communities that were underserved by physicians in Ontario went from 63 to 142. There were so many that the number almost became meaningless. We all know in this House how important it is to have access to primary health care and have family physicians. I know it has been a challenge in my community as well.

Ontarians have made their position clear, both in 2003 and in 2007, that they are not prepared to continue down that road of cuts to the health care system. They have spoken in two elections on this issue. This year, we're proposing a \$40-billion investment in the health care sector, and that's \$11 billion more than when we came to office in 2003, a remarkable 37% increase in health care expenditures in the province of Ontario since 2003.

We can talk about some of the comments that were made by leaders of the opposition when they were in office, the Premier of the day calling nurses hula hoops and laying off thousands of nurses, again, driving up the number of underserved communities. When the NDP was in office, we recall cuts to medical schools. Some 13% of the seats in our medical schools were eliminated, adding to our shortage of physicians today in Ontario. We know that, while they talk about the importance of nurses and physicians to the public sector, their collective agreements were ripped up by the NDP. They simply said, "We don't want to honour your collective agreements any more, and we're going to eliminate those." That's not how our government has treated nurses and physicians, or anyone in the health care sector for that matter, so it is in stark contrast to where the opposition wants to take this province.

We have made a lot of these investments as well as maintaining a balanced budget. If you think of the period in which the Conservatives were in office, the price of a barrel of oil was about \$30 and the Canadian dollar was at about 60 cents US. Today, oil is over \$100 a barrel, the Canadian dollar is at par with the US, and we are still managing to maintain a balanced budget and make substantial investments in our health care sector.

I can't support the opposition's position that they would cut \$3 billion from health care. Certainly, my community doesn't support that. They want more investments in our health care sector.

We've shortened waiting times. To point out a few of them specifically: The wait time for cataract surgeries is down 191 days, or 61%; the wait time for angiography is down 26 days, or 47%; the wait time for knee replace-

ments is down 196 days, or 45%; and the wait time for CT scans is down 32 days, or 40%.

In Sault Ste. Marie we were able to purchase a new CT scanner, and a number of communities benefited from these new CT scanners. The cost of one of these pieces of equipment was about \$2 million. I remember a community group in my riding, years ago, fundraising to buy one of these pieces of equipment because it was so important to have.

The example in our community is that 6,600 more residents in Sault Ste. Marie are now able to get CT scans than they were previously, because the previous piece of equipment, which in its day was useful but became somewhat dated, took about eight images of your body. The new CT scanner takes 64 images. It takes 90 seconds to put somebody through this piece of equipment. The previous CT scanner took about 15 minutes.

Wait times are going down because of access to technology, and that's something that our government is pleased to be funding and supporting.

Hip replacements: The wait time is down 129 days, or 37%. Cancer surgeries: The wait time is down 12 days, or 15%. Angioplasty: down nine days, or 32%; and MRIs down seven days, or 6%.

Under our government, the wait times for key medical procedures in the province of Ontario continue to go down.

Opposition members need to recognize, not disregard, these realities of our health care system in making these investments. Eliminating the health care premium, cutting \$3 billion out of our health care budget, is not going to accelerate wait times, get us more doctors, allow us to hire more nurses, provide more long-term care, provide more home care services, or improve public health organizations. It's counterintuitive. I'm not sure why such a partisan interest is being presented here in the House when, clearly, the evidence is counter to that.

We've improved access to health care professionals.

We've got 500,000 people today who in 2003 didn't have a family doctor but now have somebody to call their family doctor.

We've hired 8,900 new nurses since 2003 in the province of Ontario.

We've got a new, fantastic Northern Ontario School of Medicine. My colleague from Thunder Bay-Atikokan is pleased that one of the campuses is in his riding as well as in Sudbury. It has been a great benefit to northern Ontario. I know the first class will be graduating next year. I know the interns are out in the communities across northern Ontario, already working and helping to support other medical professionals in the community. We're the only province building new medical schools. This is the first new medical school built in Canada in more than 30 years. It's fantastic news for people in Ontario and certainly in northern Ontario.

The collective effort of increasing physician supply by increasing the number of foreign-trained spaces from 90 to 200, by increasing the enrolment at medical schools by about 15% and by building a new medical school has



added to increasing physician supply in Ontario by about 23%. It's certainly in stark contrast to the NDP, who decided that they would cut medical school spaces—that didn't help get more doctors—and the Conservatives, who sat on their hands, really, for eight years when it came to physician supply, driving the number of underserved communities up from 62 to 143.

*Interjections.*

**Mr. David Oraziatti:** I hear some of the opposition members expressing concern about that, but we know that's the reality on this side of the House.

We've provided more services for home care—approximately \$800 million since 2003, or 38%, as well as adding an end-of-life care strategy supporting an additional 200,000 Ontarians.

We've increased the provincial share of public health funding for our public health units by 50%. It has been an absolutely fantastic initiative, certainly in our community, and well received.

Today there are three new, free vaccines that children in Ontario get, which would cost, on average, a family \$600 if they wanted all of those vaccinations.

1610

We've also introduced the human papillomavirus vaccination for 84,000 young women in grade eight to be able to have access to that vaccination.

Doctor Janice Willett, the president of the Ontario Medical Association, who lives in my riding of Sault Ste. Marie and practises medicine there, had this to say:

"The government has taken steps in recent years to reduce wait times, and together with the hard work of doctors and other health care professionals, patients in targeted areas are getting better access to care.... The additional investments in general surgeries are a positive step towards improving access for patients in the province."

Terry Sullivan, who is the president and CEO of Cancer Care Ontario, said he "applauds the Ontario government's budget commitment to increasing cancer screening rates for breast, cervical and colorectal cancers. This will enable to us detect more cancers early and save lives."

That's what we're talking about. We're not talking about cutting \$3 billion from the Ontario health budget like the opposition would like us to do. That's not going to make individuals in the health care sector interested in supporting our budget or our position, and it is certainly not going to provide Ontarians with the services that they need when it comes to very important medical procedures that all of our loved ones need and deserve.

In our community in Sault Ste. Marie, we've provided \$2.7 million to the Algoma Residential Community Hospice. I want to congratulate the Minister of Health, Minister Smitherman, on his support for this particular initiative in my community. It's being very well received. The organization has been struggling to raise funds, having many fundraisers and voluntary efforts to find the \$3 million that they require to support residential hospices. It has been fantastic news in our community.

In fact, Helen Ross, the executive director of the hospice, said, "The Ontario Liberal government has recognized the need for residential hospices and has moved forward to support all of us who believe that everyone has the right to die in dignity, free from pain and surrounded by their loved ones." That's Helen Ross, who's the executive director of the Algoma Residential Community Hospice.

We've also provided about \$13 million locally in my community to reduce wait times at the Sault Area Hospital. I mentioned the new CT scanner, helping to accelerate the number of individuals who are able to access that equipment; in fact, 6,600 more procedures a year. They've been provided with almost \$4 million for new medical equipment, 48 long-term-care beds and 12 new convalescent care beds.

The group health centre, which has been a model of delivery for family health teams right across the province, received a contract of about \$26 million. They've also seen some money for research, for vascular intervention and cardiac rehabilitation. It has certainly been very well received in our community.

Nearly \$5 million in additional resources have flowed to Sault Ste. Marie for home care services. I can tell you: In 2003, the phone at my office was ringing off the wall with individuals saying, "I need to get my 85-year-old mother a few hours a week—a nurse to come to her house and get her some home care services," or, "my 75-year-old father," or whoever it may have been. I know that we substantially increased the funding for home care organizations. Our community care access centre in Sault Ste. Marie received substantially more money than they had in the past and, as a result, hired over 20 new staff—dietitians, occupational and physiotherapists, nurses and the like. In effect, those waiting lists in our community dried up, which was great news for our community.

We've provided \$1 million for a new state-of-the-art emergency medical centre, and also resources to support land ambulance—a very important partnership with our municipalities. This is something that I recall, as a former city councillor, seeing the former Conservative government download provincial service after provincial service and claim to municipalities, "Trust us, it's revenue neutral; don't worry, we're going to give you the money."

*Interjections.*

**Mr. David Oraziatti:** I hear some of my colleagues who were also on municipal councils at the time, who know that that was about the furthest from the truth as you could get. We continue to struggle. I recall our finance commissioner coming in to do a budget and say, "We have increasing costs, and the province hasn't come through with the money again and again and again. We're going to be a couple of million dollars short, so we have to find a way to make ends meet." It was part of the big one-point plan that the Conservatives had to cut taxes and not reinvest in health care or schools, infrastructure or really anything else, for that matter. That was a challenge.



I'm very pleased that we provided about \$1 million on an ongoing basis for land ambulance improvements in our community so that we can reach really what municipalities and AMO had been calling for, which is a true 50-50 partnership when it comes to land ambulance.

I just want to highlight a couple of examples from various ridings.

In the Niagara West–Glanbrook riding, residents have benefited from an investment of about \$92 million to reduce wait times in Niagara and Hamilton area hospitals. Hospice capital funding has been provided to support the construction of residential hospices in Grimsby and Stoney Creek. And yet I hear members from the opposition and the member from this riding stand up and say, "I don't support the health premium, I don't support this funding, and I want to see \$3 billion taken out of health care." Yet here are the investments that are being made in their ridings. I'd like to know which of these projects they don't want to see move forward, they don't want to proceed with. I think it's fair that constituents in that riding know about the more than—

**Mr. Jeff Leal:** Norm Miller forgot about that new bridge the other day.

**Mr. David Oraziatti:** Absolutely—more than \$500 million to renew hospital infrastructure in Hamilton and Niagara area hospitals, including the construction of a replacement hospital in Grimsby. Grimsby residents will benefit from a new local-share policy set by our government to reduce the local share required for the construction of the new West Lincoln Memorial Hospital. Their local share is going to be reduced by about \$15 million. It's fantastic news for residents in Niagara West–Glanbrook, but I heard the member from that riding stand up yesterday and say, "Well, I can't support this, and I don't support this." So I'd like the member to come clean when it comes to what they're telling their residents.

One hundred and thirteen new full-time nurses have been hired in area hospitals, including five new nursing positions at West Lincoln Memorial Hospital in Grimsby. Two family health teams in Niagara West–Glanbrook picked up more than 3,000 orphan patients so far. So it's absolutely fantastic news not just for members' ridings on this side of the House, but in many opposition ridings as well.

Wait-times funding for the Kitchener-Waterloo area hospitals has equalled about \$24 million. They've got about 39 new positions. Twenty-one nursing grads also took advantage of our new nursing guarantee and got jobs at the Grand River Hospital. Two family health teams in Kitchener also picked up more than 3,000 orphan patients thus far.

**Mrs. Carol Mitchell:** Wasn't she the former Minister of Health?

**Mr. David Oraziatti:** I think that is the riding of the former Minister of Health. I think you're quite right.

In the riding of Haldimand–Norfolk, more than \$200,000 has been provided to the general hospital to reduce cataract surgeries by about 61%—great news for the people in that riding. Twenty-eight positions have

been funded for late career initiatives to assist experienced nurses and help them stay working and on the job to support younger nurses and mentor them as well. They've also had two new family health teams that have picked up about 850 former orphan patients in the riding of Haldimand–Norfolk.

I have yet to hear the members from these ridings recognize that the resources that we are ensuring are delivered to all ridings in all parts of this province. Health care is not a partisan issue. This is an important issue to all Ontarians. We are living up to our responsibilities to ensure that all Ontarians have better access to health care, closer to home where they need it and certainly where they deserve it.

Certainly I want to recognize that we have more to do when it comes to health care. I fully acknowledge that. I know that I continually meet with local stakeholders in my riding and with various organizations, but I want to say that we've come a very long way when it comes to our approach in terms of dealing with physicians, nurses, long-term care, public health, home care services and the like.

In very sharp contrast, we've balanced the budget and we're not leaving Ontarians with a \$5-billion deficit. We're making very important investments in our public health sector, improving access to health care, shortening wait times and promoting health awareness. We've got a new Ministry of Health Promotion. I see the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing is here, who was the first Minister of Health Promotion and has done a fantastic job in the province of Ontario. The current minister is here as well, Minister Margaret Best.

**Interjection:** She's the best.

**Mr. David Oraziatti:** Absolutely. She's doing a fantastic job as well, as we work to help reduce health care costs and pressures in the province of Ontario and work hard to educate Ontarians about health care. I'm going it to continue to support this position.

1620

**Mr. John Yakabuski:** It's my pleasure to join this debate on the substantive motion on the government's promise to review the health tax that they so illegally instituted in 2004.

**Mrs. Carol Mitchell:** Promises made; promises kept.

**Mr. John Yakabuski:** I hear the member for Huron–Bruce say, "Promise made, promise kept." Oh, what a perfect segue: "promise made." That is, in fact, the issue here. It's about the credibility and the dependability of the word of the current Premier. When he was the opposition leader, running to be the Premier, he insisted over and over and over again—in fact, he made a big deal about signing the pledge. When I was a kid, when you got confirmed, you had to take the pledge that you wouldn't drink until you were legally able.

**Hon. Jim Watson:** Did you sign that pledge?

**Mr. John Yakabuski:** I'm not sure about that, but I do know this: The Premier wilfully and gleefully—he kind of smirked when he signed it—said, "I, Dalton McGuinty, do solemnly swear," blah-blah-blah, "that I



will not raise your taxes.” He repeated that over and over again. This was during the campaign. Then, subsequent to the election, let’s just look at some of the things that the Premier said. I’ve got some of these quotes here.

First of all, when he got elected, he insisted that—  
*Interjection.*

**Mr. John Yakabuski:** No, that’s good. We’re good with that.

October 30, 2003: “The McGuinty government ... will ... maintain personal income tax rates.”

“I won’t lower your taxes, but I won’t raise them either.” You remember him saying that.

Prior to that, on September 22, just prior to the election, he said, “Taxes paid by individuals and small businesses will be the same as they are today if the Ontario Liberals form the next government.” He did that in response to a question saying, “But, Premier, there seems to be some speculation and a possibility that the budget of the province of Ontario could be in a deficit to the tune of \$4.5 billion or more.” He basically said, “That doesn’t matter. Regardless of what the circumstances are, when we inherit the government, I will not be raising your taxes.”

So on October 30, he talked about maintaining personal income tax rates. Just two days after that, on November 1, he said, “We will not be raising taxes.” He said that on Focus Ontario. You know, it’s sort of like, when you try to pull a fast one once, somebody might say, “Oh, he’s a bit mischievous, a bit of a trickster.” But when it becomes a pattern and it’s over and over and over again, then the word “pathological” comes to mind.

Three weeks after that, his throne speech contained this statement:

“... this government made a commitment to maintain personal income tax rates at the current level.

“Legislation will be introduced to keep that commitment.”

So now we’re almost up to Christmastime.

He followed this up with, in the Sudbury Star the following day, “We are not going to raise taxes. That’s just not on the table.”

And this in Hansard, November 24, 2003: “We are going to maintain personal income tax rates.”

He specifically dismissed the idea of tax increases as a tool to deal with the deficit during question period on December 17 that year. That was the day that the government released its economic statement on the province’s finances. Hansard, December 17: “I just don’t believe that Ontario families should have to pay the price.... I’m not prepared to encumber them with further taxes.”

On and on it continued right up until April 24, just a couple of weeks before the budget, under continuing question, amid the speculation that he might raise taxes. Focus Ontario, April 24: “Well, what we’ve said all along, I am very clear about this, is that we’re not going to be raising taxes.”

Three weeks later on May 18, 2004: The infamous budget in which Dalton McGuinty brought forth the largest tax increase in the history of the province of

Ontario. He instituted a tax increase, a health care tax of up to \$900 a person.

Originally, they denied that it was a tax. First of all, we have gone through this and, as I say, the word “pathological” comes to mind. So, on and on and on we heard about this, that he wouldn’t do the exact thing that he did in May 2004.

When somebody says over and over and over—they don’t say it once; it can’t be dismissed as, oh, maybe they weren’t thinking or they just didn’t understand the question, but they say it over and over and over again—“I won’t raise your taxes,” a pattern has been established.

You would think that someone would care enough about their own credibility that if they thought they were going to do the exact opposite, they would have somehow changed their story. But no, no, right up until the 11th hour, right up until the hangman was there to pull the lever on the gallows, he insisted that he wouldn’t be raising taxes. Then they did exactly that.

Then they compounded the problem because they insisted: “No, no, no. This is not a tax; it’s a premium.” Well, you know that if you pay premiums, when you do your income tax at the end of the year, you can claim premiums and get a deduction and have your taxes reduced because you’ve paid premiums. Some of them are tax deductible, some of them are not, but for the most part you can actually claim them. This is not a premium, as we know, because at the end of the year you actually were hit with an additional tax. It’s an unfair and regressive way that they did it. First of all, it’s the diabolical way that they instituted it, and then it is so unfair because of the fact that the higher your income, the less you actually pay as a percentage of your income in health tax. So it’s the low-income people and the middle-income people who are actually hurt the worst.

The Liberals talk about their principles and how they care about the working man and the below-average income earners and people like that, and then they do this exact thing.

I have to be careful in the way I choose my words here, but it’s the way in which they instituted the tax that is the real crime here. In some societies, if somebody did that so many times over and over again, they would be guilty of a crime.

What happens here too is they’re not only paying the health care tax once. Hard-working Ontarians are also finding that they’re paying it twice. Once isn’t enough for Dalton McGuinty. No, no; you’ve got to get it twice. It was so ill-considered and it was so ill-conceived that they didn’t realize that all of these collective agreements out there, these workers who have negotiated collective agreements with their employees—many of them public sector employers such as the cities of Toronto, Ottawa and London—they’ve lost court cases now, which says that they, as the employer, have to pay the health care tax. But what does that mean? It’s not that the city of Ottawa or London or Toronto is paying that tax; it’s the people whom the cities get their revenue from who are paying that tax. So those taxpayers are getting hit twice:



once when they pay their own income taxes at the end of the fiscal year and also on their property taxes, because these cities are now paying for the health premium that the people under their employ pay. So they have to pay it not once, in Dalton McGuinty's Ontario, but twice. I'm sure that if those Liberals could find a way to charge them a third time, they'd be doing it.

1630

The other thing that bothers me about this whole motion—and I sometimes have to wonder why we're here—is that the outcome has already been determined. He's not interested in debating. He's not even looking for ways to fix the problems with the health care tax. There are all kinds of things that were either unintended, possibly—I might even give them a bit of the benefit of the doubt there—or certainly unexpected consequences of this tax. But they're not interested in making any kind of changes or amendments so that this ill-conceived and illegal tax would actually work in a fairer way. They're not looking at making any changes.

Dalton McGuinty has said, first of all—do you know why he's doing this? He's doing it because he's mandated by law for us to have this debate. He's not doing it because he wants to see whether there's a way that we can make things better. He's not doing it because there might be a way that we can make this fairer for lower-income people, because if you're making \$1 million, you're still only paying \$900 for this health tax. If you're making about \$60,000, you're paying \$900 for this health tax. So how is that fair? But he's not interested in looking at that and seeing if there are ways that we can change this to be fair. He's not looking at that. Here's what he said: "We're mandated by law to review the health tax and we will do that." The champion, the Guinness World Records book record-holder of all time for broken promises, wants to keep one, so he's going to make sure we have this debate. "We're mandated by law to review this health tax and we will do that." But he says, "I made it very clear before the campaign and during the campaign what my view is." He continued, "We're only doing this because we're obligated to do so." And finally, "I think the outcome is pretty predictable."

If you have no intention of trying to improve something, no intention of looking for ways that you can be fairer by the mistakes that you have made, then what is the point of going through this exercise? Just filling time in the Ontario Legislative Assembly? I think there should be other things to be talking about, but if you're really seriously looking to make this place better and to make Ontario better for the people who live here, particularly those who are struggling under the Dalton McGuinty tax-and-spend regime, then maybe we can make this debate worthwhile and meaningful.

Let's talk a little bit about health care. I heard the member from Sault Ste. Marie go on and on and on about what he perceived as the improvements to health care under the McGuinty Liberals. But if you ask the people in Ontario where they see the health system in this province, they don't agree with him. They see longer

lineups in emergency rooms; they see more and more people who can't get a bed in a long-term-care centre and are on waiting lists that never seem to get shorter, only longer; they see more people looking for a family doctor—and no help and no solutions coming from the provincial government.

When they instituted this tax, they promised that every single penny would go to health care in this province. We know that's not the case. They even had to admit that they were putting it into sewer pipes and other infrastructure projects in the initial stages, and now it's just gone into general revenue.

**Hon. David Caplan:** Look at Barry's Bay.

**Mr. John Yakabuski:** I hear the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal heckling me over there, as he likes to do from time to time. Infrastructure is important, but I think there's room to be honest about where you're spending your money and how you're spending it. You don't tell somebody that it's going here when it's going there. This is not about whether the priorities have to be met—of course they do—but I think there's room for the people in Ontario to get straight answers from their government regardless of what party forms that government. That should be expected of every government, in the province of Ontario or anywhere else. In a democracy we expect our governments to give us the straight goods, not to tell us, "We're going to put the money here," and then put it there. That's not too much to expect. I know the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal would agree with me on that point. We don't always agree, but I'm sure we would on that one.

By the way, we are very pleased with the assistance that was given to my community in Madawaska Valley to ensure that a new waste water treatment plant could be built. We do appreciate that.

**Hon. David Caplan:** Which is a health issue.

**Mr. John Yakabuski:** Absolutely. Yes, it certainly is.

I wanted to talk about some of the issues that they say have been addressed in health care. I started to, and then we got onto the sewer pipe because the minister wanted to talk about sewers. More people in this province are looking for a family doctor. There was a big story in the *Ottawa Citizen*—front page—last Saturday about the number of people who can't get a family doctor in eastern Ontario; about the community of Eganville and the efforts they have gone to to secure a family doctor. They've got the building, they've got the office, they're ready to go, but they can't get the help from the McGuinty government.

The McGuinty government now has become fixated on family health teams, which is an idea they stole from the previous government, but they don't want to finance the kinds of projects that some of the smaller communities need to bring a doctor to their community. Some doctors don't want to work for a fee for service; they want to work as a salaried employee of the community health centre. But they don't want to support those any more, and that's a real challenge for people in rural Ontario communities. I think that people in rural Ontario



have the same rights to a family doctor as anywhere else. This government, I do believe, is failing in that regard.

I heard the member from Sault Ste. Marie talking about the medical school up in Thunder Bay. Well, it was the Harris government that approved that and got the ball rolling, and they know it. They simply want to take credit for it. The fact is that that started with the Harris government, and—

*Interjections.*

**Mr. John Yakabuski:** —the people on this side of the House are simply not going to let those people on the government side take credit for the good initiatives, the good ideas and the important things that were done to ensure that doctors would be taught and built here in the province of Ontario so that we could address the challenges of the years ahead. This government today doesn't want to give any credit to the previous government—and there are so many places where we could talk about that.

The one thing we never forgot in that government was that your word is your bond. When you tell somebody you're going to do it, there's a tremendous expectation that that's exactly what you're going to do. In the previous government, you could depend on it; in this government, they've clearly shown that you can't.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath):** I would ask the members to try to maintain order. Further debate? The member for Thunder Bay.

*Interjection.*

**Mr. Bill Mauro:** Why not? Thank you very much, Madam Speaker, for this unintended consequence. This is a fortunate opportunity to respond to the comments of our friend from across the aisle. He was making

reference to some of the comments that were made by the member from Sault Ste. Marie in response to some of the good things that had flowed from the health care premium. Over the course of the last two days, and previous to that, I think it's been clear for most people in this House that all members in all ridings have experienced significant benefit from the implementation of this health—

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath):** Member from Thunder Bay—Atikokan, apparently you've already spoken to this motion, so you are not able to take the floor a second time, as I'm sure you are aware. So I call again for further debate. Further debate?

The Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal has moved that the standing committee on finance and economic affairs, as constituted by the assembly, review the Ontario health premium, in accordance with section 29.2 of the Income Tax Act.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion the ayes have it.

The motion has been carried.

*Agreed to.*

**Hon. David Caplan:** I move adjournment of the House.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath):** Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

The House now stands adjourned until this evening at 6:45 p.m.

*The House adjourned at 1642.*

*Evening meeting reported in volume B.*

## ERRATA

No.	Page	Column	Line(s)	Should read:
19	668	1	46	vince's history. With \$5 billion at their disposal, you'd
23A	843	1	23	<b>Mr. Norm Miller:</b> I'm pleased to add some

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of Ontario**

First Session, 39<sup>th</sup> Parliament

**Assemblée législative  
de l'Ontario**

Première session, 39<sup>e</sup> législature

**Official Report  
of Debates  
(Hansard)**

**Journal  
des débats  
(Hansard)**

**Wednesday 9 April 2008**

**Mercredi 9 avril 2008**

Speaker  
Honourable Steve Peters

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# LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 9 April 2008

# ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 9 avril 2008

*The House met at 1845.*

## ORDERS OF THE DAY

### BUDGET MEASURES AND INTERIM APPROPRIATION ACT, 2008

#### LOI DE 2008 SUR LES MESURES BUDGÉTAIRES ET L'AFFECTATION ANTICIPÉE DE CRÉDITS

Resuming the debate adjourned on April 8, 2008, on the motion for second reading of Bill 44, An Act respecting Budget measures, interim appropriations and other matters / Projet de loi 44, Loi concernant les mesures budgétaires, l'affectation anticipée de crédits et d'autres questions.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott):** Further debate? I recognize the member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke.

**Mr. John Yakabuski:** I must say I'm a little off balance here. I was caught slightly off balance with this 6:45 recommencing time of the evening sitting. You see, when we came back in the fall—you remember that, Mr. Speaker—we talked about a family-friendly place, some new rules. There was going to be a new sheriff in town, as they say; and things were going to change around here, as they say. One of the things that was going to change was that we were going to do away with these night sittings, because out in TV land, you have to recall, I say to the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal, all of those people out there are not that interested in watching what we have to say at this time of night.

You see, tonight, the NHL playoffs are starting.

**Hon. Jim Watson:** The Lumber Kings.

**Mr. John Yakabuski:** Ah, the Lumber Kings, I say to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. The Pembroke Lumber Kings—now that is a hockey team.

It takes me to another thought, just slightly off the topic for now. When you want to talk about the difference between small-town Ontario and the big city—David Miller's Toronto or, maybe not too far down the road, George Smitherman's Toronto; that's a possibility. The Minister of Health actually can't seem to make up his mind. One day he's talking about, "Maybe I'm going to take a run at being the mayor of Toronto." I know the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing was a mayor

of a major city in this province before. He was a mayor of the city of Ottawa. He was a good Conservative at that point. I don't know what happened between Ottawa and here, but in those days he was making a lot of sense, and increasingly, I regret to say, he's making less and less. I'm not saying I don't like the man. I'm not saying he doesn't make a contribution here. But he was far more logical and more in tune with the people of Ontario when he was a Conservative.

But anyway, the Pembroke Lumber Kings—

*Interjections.*

**Mr. John Yakabuski:** I don't want to lose this thought, even if the member for Peterborough wants to heckle, and I know he loves to heckle. I do want to talk about those Pembroke Lumber Kings. I was going back to that thought about the difference between small-town Ontario and the big city. Right now, you've got Smiths Falls and Pembroke in the CJHL finals. Those two towns—Pembroke is a city, a small city, but when you go to those rinks for a hockey game, they're full. When you go to the rinks of some of those other teams, the only people who are watching the games when the other teams play at their home games are the girlfriends and/or the parents. But in Pembroke, it's like religion. Everybody is there. I have had the honour on several occasions to sing the national anthem at a Lumber Kings game. The atmosphere is electric in that building, and they are just ready for that puck to drop. Small-town Ontario, that's what we always have to remember. At one point, this was small-town Ontario, and now it's dominated by a government that is dominated by Toronto.

*Interjections.*

**Mr. John Yakabuski:** No, that's true, and even if the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing wants to say, "I'm from Ottawa"—let's talk about Ottawa for a minute.

I'm glad I thought of Ottawa, because in this recent announcement—and I'm just going to take off this device here for a moment. I have some empathy for the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing because he's in a tough position. But there's old Ottawa that took this \$14.6 million, and they're calling it a "snow and slush fund" because, you see, on the one hand, they're saying that this money has to be spent on municipal roads and bridges. The minister, the member from Ottawa West–Nepean, was in the newspaper; he was ticked. At least, he says he was ticked. But you never know. You also have to remember that this is politics and they are the party of Dalton McGuinty. So he's upset, or at least he's feigning being upset, about Ottawa taking this \$14.6 million. Do



you know what they're going to do? They're going to put it into the snow fund. It's a slush fund—the people of Ontario got snowed. That's what happened. It's \$14.6 million.

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I don't know how much time I've got here, Mr. Speaker, but there is never enough.

This is the budget bill, Bill 44. I'm going to start over and say this really slow: \$96 billion. In 2003—the 2002-03 budget, when the spending in this province was \$68 billion—if somebody were to have said, “Do you know what? In five years, they are going to be spending \$96 billion,” I believe the reaction of that person would have simply been, “That's \$96 billion?” There isn't possibly anything left in this province that they wouldn't have taken care of with that kind of money. If they were doing the job right, they would have it all taken care of. But what have they done with that money? They have built an insular wall around the government, this gigantic group of bureaucratic advisers and everything else. Half of the jobs created in this province are in the public service. I want you to keep that figure, \$96 billion, in mind. All of this spending—a 48% increase in spending since this government took office. The taxpayers out there have to ask themselves a question: “What are they doing with my money?” It's not rocket science. That's a \$26-billion increase in spending per year under this government. You would think there would not be a problem left.

*Interjections.*

**Mr. John Yakabuski:** Not enough. Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing and the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal are on House duty tonight, as you can see. I don't know; maybe they're not hockey fans, or maybe they're Leafs fans. Hey, yeah, you're a Leafs fan, aren't you? Say it in Ottawa. Say you're a Leafs fan in Ottawa. Tell the truth.

*Interjections.*

**Mr. John Yakabuski:** They're here for the sole purpose of trying to heckle this speaker.

**Mrs. Maria Van Bommel:** It can't be. Say it's not so.

**Mr. John Yakabuski:** It's got to be.

We want to talk about their spending and their taxation and their lack of respect for taxpayers' dollars.

Margaret Thatcher, the Iron Lady, had a saying, and it was something to the effect—and I'll only paraphrase—that, “Government can give you everything, but only if it takes everything from you,” and that's the philosophy of this government. They want to put everything into public services, the public service, the bureaucracy, but they want to take everything from you. They're not going to be happy until the only thing left in your pocket is lint. That's the philosophy of this government. So when they've got all your money and they can't take any more, then they're going to have to come to the icy realization, “You know what? We've taken all the people's money. We've taxed the businesses out of existence. Who's going to create the jobs?”

One of the problems that I see this winter, if you go around this province and ask some of the older folks or ask some of the younger folks who have children, who are having a tough time in this province—they can't go to their employer and say, “We need a raise. We need more money.” You know what the employer's saying to them? “I don't have the money to give you one because the Dalton McGuinty Ontario Liberal tax-and-spend government is taking everything from me, and they won't give me a break. How am I supposed to give you something?” But when that oil bill comes in—and the price of oil this year is \$1.08 or \$1.09 a litre; I'll have to check my last oil bill—it's up about 30% under Dalton McGuinty this winter. They're asking themselves, “Where's the help and where's the relief for the low-income senior or the low-income young family trying to raise two or three children here in Dalton McGuinty's Ontario?” There is no relief. Those same employers who can't give them a raise: Sooner or later, under this strangling environment that they've been put into under this government, those same people who can't get a raise from their employer may be getting a layoff slip.

That could be the legacy of Dalton McGuinty's Ontario, because they just don't get it. They believe that if you just keep taking people's money and spending it, they're going to be happy. Whatever became of the idea that maybe the people would do a better job of spending their own money? That's lost on this government.

History looks like it wants to repeat itself, because, if you remember the David Peterson government of 1985-90—

**Hon. Jim Watson:** Those were the good old days.

**Mr. John Yakabuski:** The Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing says, “Those were the good old days.” Yes, if you maintain the philosophy that this current government believes in. Those were the glory days of tax-and-spend Liberalism. They squandered some great economic years in Ontario by taking everything they could and pouring it into whatever they thought somebody might like because, you see, they see the practice of taking taxpayers' money and spending it on something that they like—that vote-buying practice that they think, in the end, works, and it does, in the short term. You remember: David Peterson in 1987 won 92 out of 130 seats in this Legislature because he bought them with your money.

This government uses the same philosophy. But, like everything else, the chickens come home to roost. And there is the catch. Some day, there's going to be a day of reckoning, when the taxpayer who has been beaten up, whipped and robbed by this government simply has nothing left to give.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott):** I'm going to ask you to withdraw that unparliamentary remark.

**Mr. John Yakabuski:** I withdraw—that has been beaten, whipped and mugged by this government, almost in a purse-snatching episode. They just drive in and—



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**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott):** I'm going to ask you again to withdraw that unparliamentary language and not persist in trying to rephrase it.

**Mr. John Yakabuski:** I withdraw. I apologize if anything I've said is unparliamentary, because I'm doing my very best.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott):** Don't apologize, just withdraw.

**Mr. John Yakabuski:** I withdraw.

So, all of this money that has been taken away from the taxpayer: Eventually they can give no more. You can't get blood from a stone, and even a sponge eventually gets wrung dry. That's what they're doing to the taxpayers and the businesses in this province.

I'm not going to stand here and say that investment is not a good thing. It is, but investment has to be well targeted, well planned and well positioned to garner additional investments.

Of course, the people on the other side of the House are going to get up and they're going to have their rebuttal and they're going to have their remarks. Do you know what they're going to say? Just mark these things down; they'll come true. They're going to say, "Those guys over there, those are the Tories who want us to take X number of dollars out of health care and X number of dollars out of this." I want to make one thing crystal clear. At no time since the Liberal government was elected, and at no time since they instituted their illegal and regressive health tax, has any member of the Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario ever stood up and said that they would cut health care spending in this province. What we would do—and I want to make this very, very clear—is manage the financial resources of this province so that those investments could be made without taking every single penny and every incentive and taking every hope away from business that operates in this province.

How do you need to take more money from the people when your revenue is already up 48%? If revenue was up 68%, would they spend that too? Is that the kind of management—they're like the kind of person who wins a lottery, and out the door they go. You know what they're doing; and 30 days later they've got nothing. It's just like a frenzy when you put money into a Liberal's hands. They've just got to go somewhere and spend it—no planning.

They are going to tell you that the money they invested in infrastructure—there's not a municipality in Ontario, certainly not a municipality in my riding of Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, that is not happy and pleased with the money they've received.

*Interjections.*

**Mr. John Yakabuski:** Absolutely. But they also have asked me, "Why are we not getting some kind of a sustainable funding plan? We want to be able to go to our ratepayers and say, 'This is our infrastructure plan for the next five years,' not 'Whenever the Liberal government feels like it, they're going to throw something our way.'" That's not the way you operate a business. It's certainly

not the way you should operate a government. Investments in key areas like infrastructure are extremely important, but the process that this government used in order to get that money out the door—do you think they didn't know five months ago that they were going to have this money? They knew five months ago they would have this money. Why didn't they talk to the municipalities? Why didn't they sit down at ROMA and say, "Look, this is what we have"? They were able to put stuff in their budget that they had to have known weeks, maybe months, before. That's not the kind of sleight of hand that municipalities are looking for. They're looking for a commitment from their provincial partner that ongoing, sustainable funding will be the order of the day, not the Liberal vote-buying scheme at the end of the year.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott):** Questions and comments?

**Mr. Rosario Marchese:** I have a little concern. I like the member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, but he started out by talking about big cities, small towns, and then he started attacking Toronto a little bit in his own way. I've got to tell you I get a bit concerned by those things because I grew up in Toronto, just about 10 minutes away from here, with a brisk walk 15—Shaw Street, Montrose, Delaware, all downtown—and I kind of like Toronto. I don't think we run everything, really. So when I feel attacked by so many of the folks outside of Toronto, I then wonder, maybe we should secede from the rest of you. I'm thinking, how many of you believe that we should—

*Interjections.*

**Mr. Rosario Marchese:** I wonder whether my good friend John, from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, thinks that maybe Toronto should be its own province. If that is true, I'm willing to vote for that. If you have an opinion in that regard, please let me know.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott):** The Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

**Hon. Jim Watson:** Can I have his extra 53 seconds?

I'm always amused by the member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke because he is a member who has one of the worst cases of political amnesia in the Legislative Assembly. He's forgotten what happened during the Tory years when he talks about treating municipalities with respect. What did they do with the land ambulance service? Download. What did they do with ODSP? Download. Public health? Download. Drug benefit plan? Download. Housing? Download.

What did we do when we got into power? We've uploaded ODB and ODSP. That, when fully implemented over the course of the next few years, will save municipalities \$935 million. We're now at a 50-50 cost sharing arrangement with land ambulance, a 75-25 split with public health, and we have a very successful fiscal review taking place to look at the whole relationship between the municipal sector and ourselves.

Let me quote Peter Hume, an Ottawa city councillor, who sits on the fiscal review. At the pre-budget consultation he said that "we at the city of Ottawa have been



greatly encouraged by the efforts made by the government of Ontario since it was elected. After years of downloading, the Premier and his government have been clear that the current situation that leaves property taxpayers for underfunded and downloaded provincial programs is unfair and cannot continue."

Mayor Larry O'Brien said, "The province of Ontario has never in its history been as good to eastern Ontario and Ottawa as it has been over the last two years while I have been mayor.

"Our relationship is warm, it's co-operative and it is moving to the future. All I can say is I am very, very happy the city of Ottawa is working in this manner with the McGuinty government because they are coming through for the city of Ottawa."

I'm proud of the relationship that we have developed with the municipal sector. I look forward to strengthening that in the years ahead.

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**Mrs. Julia Munro:** Two points I would like to make: The question of the bill that accompanies the budget in terms of Bill 35 demonstrates that complete lack of understanding of the importance of long-term funding for municipalities, and the fact that infrastructure is a long-term commitment. I think it's very interesting that the Minister of Municipal Affairs should refer to this. In my community, when people talk about infrastructure and the need for it, in looking at the extension of the 404 just between Mulock and Green Lane and the number of jobs that are there, even on only one side of the highway, it demonstrates the importance of being able to have long-term funding and an understanding of the importance of that infrastructure.

I want to also comment on some of the remarks made by the Minister of Municipal Affairs. When he's talking about the downloading, somehow there's part of that trade that always gets forgotten whenever the Liberals are talking about this. In my area, 66% of the dollar was in education. That opportunity to take education—it turned out to be only 50% of it, but that was according to what the municipalities of the day wanted. But no one talks on the other side, on the government side, about the fact that that was lifted. That was the part of the municipal budget that was rising at the greatest increase. I think it's important to include that half of the equation.

**Ms. Andrea Horwath:** I have to say that I find the debate this evening very, very interesting because on the one hand the member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke brought some interesting points to the table, and then the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing tried to justify this budget, pretending that it actually does what it needs to do for municipalities. The bottom line, everyone knows, is that after the end of this term of government for the Liberals, after being about eight years in office, they still won't even have dealt with a third of the downloading problem, and that's not including all the things they're now foisting onto municipalities in terms of responsibility.

I have to tell you, affordable housing is still a huge problem for municipalities; social services costs are still a huge problem for municipalities. If the economy is going the way we think it's going, the whole cost of social services is going to become an enormous problem in Ontario. Similarly, the entire issue around ODB and ODSP: It's not fast enough and it's not enough actual impact to make a huge difference for municipalities, particularly when they're staring down an economic downturn.

The bottom line is that the government still is not dealing with issues like court security costs, which should not be funded out of police budgets. It still sits with municipalities. This government should take care of provincial court security costs. It shouldn't be up to municipal police forces to leach off of their budgets to take care of that. The reality is that the government is simply not really doing enough for the municipal sector. Instead, what they do is they tell them, "Maybe with a hope and a prayer, if we happen to have a surplus in any year, you might be able to actually get a little bit of extra capital dollars." They said that, of course, and the cruel joke was that they're not projecting a surplus. The crueller joke is that we find out the bill doesn't even talk about municipalities.

So I find it quite strange that this government wants to brag about its record with municipalities when it's very poor.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott):** That concludes the time available for questions and comments. I'm pleased to return to the member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, who has two minutes to reply.

**Mr. John Yakabuski:** I appreciate the comments from the member for Trinity–Spadina, the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, the member for York–Simcoe and the member for Hamilton Centre. I know that the member for Peterborough wanted to get up, but he was having trouble with the count.

I just did want to make a quick comment on the member for Trinity–Spadina. I don't know if he's advocating for a separation here or not. I'm not, but perhaps he wants to be Premier of the new province that he's advocating for. I don't know. "George for mayor; Rosie for Premier." Maybe that's the story; I don't know.

Anyway, there seem to be a lot of comments with regard to Bill 35 here as well. That's another one of the government's shell games, where they'll promise that any surplus over \$600 million or \$800 million is going to go to municipalities. When you read the fine print, they could actually give that money to a cricket club. Under the legislation, they could give that money to a cricket club. They talk about working with municipalities, but this is the kind of thing they throw out there. The fact is, if there's a surplus exceeding the \$600- or \$800-million threshold, they could actually give that money to another cricket club.

You'd think that they would have learned, with the slush fund that they perpetrated last year—they handed out money like it was going out of style, with no account-



ability whatsoever. Now they actually want to pass a law and a bill that gives them the right to institutionalize it.

**Mr. Rosario Marchese:** Bill 35.

**Mr. John Yakabuski:** Bill 35—we're talking about the budget here, but people talked about Bill 35, so we're just going down nine place points. Here we are: Bill 35. It's all about the mismanagement and the—I was going to say a bad word there, but I caught myself. It is all about this government's willingness to do anything and say anything and spend your money in the worst ways possible.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott):** Further debate?

**Mr. Rosario Marchese:** It's a wonderful opportunity to be here, to debate, to talk to the so many Liberal friends that I have on the other side, with whom I have such a close relationship on all sides.

Welcome, citizens of Ontario who are watching. It's 7:15; we're on live. I want the folks watching to put away the candy; it's not good for you. Full of sugar and full of calories—not good for you.

**Mr. John Yakabuski:** Somebody should pass a law.

**Mr. Rosario Marchese:** Very low in nutrients. Somebody should pass a law. I'm telling you, the Minister of Health Promotion is right here, and she's listening very closely, because she said in relation to the bill that I just proposed on Monday, "It's an interesting bill; it's stirring up debate," and I think she was sort of saying, "And we're going to do something about it soon." So put away the popsicles, the chocolate bars, the potato chips and all that crap and get out your carrots, get out the rapini, the broccoli, the apples and all that verdura, and start—with a glass of wine—enjoying this show. That's what this is about.

I've got a couple of things to say to my friend from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke. The last remark that he made—I completely agree with him, and I'm going to talk about it briefly. I do not agree with Tories when they talk about cutting taxes as the solution to everything. It's completely wrong, misguided; politically, ideologically wrong. They are so full of this ideological crap; they never get enough of it.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott):** Take your seat. I'm going to ask the member to refrain from using that sort of colourful language. Recognize that people are watching.

**Mr. Rosario Marchese:** They overdose on this kind of ideological stuff on a daily basis. You have to get the needles away from these guys. Where I disagree with my colleagues—with whom I'm like this, often—is on this particular issue, because it is a one-trick pony. It doesn't work. If you, my friends, Conservatives—there are so many of you here tonight—if you look at Sweden and Norway, Denmark, and so on, these are the countries that tax much more than Canadians do, much more than Americans, even more than some other European friends that are so close to them, and they are numero uno when it comes to quality of life.

In all aspects of quality of life—job creation, good jobs, benefits, good pensions, good leave of absence for mothers and fathers, great child care—they do this, my fellow Liberal friends, in a regime where they tax much more than you and ever so much more than these people, and it works.

*Interjections.*

**Mr. Rosario Marchese:** Whoa, whoa, I can't hear. Sorry?

**Mr. Bas Balkissoon:** Tell them about the suicide rate in Sweden.

**Mr. Rosario Marchese:** And the connection is?

**Mr. Bas Balkissoon:** It's the highest in the world.

**Mr. Rosario Marchese:** And so you're saying?

**Mr. Bas Balkissoon:** Well, you're saying they're the best country—

**Mr. Rosario Marchese:** My friend here is going to speak for 20 minutes soon on Liberal ideological pragmatism. It should come up very soon. I'm looking forward to that speech.

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The point is, we don't agree with them, because if they were right, then these Nordic countries should be collapsing under the weight of over-taxation, and they're not. They're doing very well. Something is good about what they're doing, where labour, corporations, industry and government work together for the—shall I dare say?—common good. For the citizenry of those countries, they seem to be doing okay.

Yet Liberals wouldn't talk about increasing taxes, cannot talk about increasing taxes, because, should they dare, they would be whacked again and again by many, especially Tories—"You broke your promises. That was bad on your part, of course, because you were not going to raise taxes, you remember? You had to break that promise. You looked bad. You really did." So you had to, in the pretext of a premium, have a tax. You had to raise \$2.4 billion through the health premium. You needed some extra money and you knew that.

We disagreed because you taxed the middle class and the working poor a lot more than those of us who earn a little more than them. That's our disagreement with that particular tax, but that's another story. The point—to highlight my difference with the Tories—is that a high-taxing country can do well and offer good benefits to its citizens, and it's not the answer to the problems of the loss of 200,000 manufacturing jobs in Ontario since 2004.

New Democrats have proposed a jobs commissioner to deal with it. It worked in British Columbia for a long, long while. It saved 120,000 jobs. We are now proposing a number of other suggestions that Manitoba is implementing and you refuse. I'm not quite sure why you are so obdurate. You refuse to accept as a possibility, as an alternative, a manufacturing investment tax credit.

Manitoba has similar kinds of conditions as we do, yet they are saving many of their manufacturing jobs. How are they doing it? They've got a manufacturing investment tax credit. It's working. It's focused on saving



good-paying jobs whose spinoffs are not just good for that individual and his family or her family but good for the entire city and the entire province. We want to maintain, keep, good-paying jobs, rather than saying, "We have to adjust to a new economy. These jobs are disappearing to China and India, and what can you do? We simply have to adjust to the new economy."

I don't believe that's true. We can keep jobs here in Ontario, and we should, because they're well-paying jobs. A manufacturing investment tax credit that works in Manitoba can work here in Ontario.

What else do we propose? An aggressive Buy Ontario program for our transit vehicles at 50% of contract value. We believe we should be buying Ontario, and that—

*Interjection.*

**Mr. Rosario Marchese:** Sorry? What have you got?

**Hon. Jim Watson:** Eighty-two per cent.

**Mr. Rosario Marchese:** The Liberals, under duress and under push, eventually had to say, "We have a 25% rule, and by the way, Toronto is doing it."

Where were you when Toronto was fighting for that 25%? Not one peep from any Toronto member or GTA member or any other member, saying, "Yes, we support Toronto as it does this." Where was Ontario to say, "We support Toronto, and, in fact, we're going to lobby for Toronto to have 25%"? Not one of you from Toronto or beyond was there, saying, "We support them." Then, under push from New Democrats, where we say that we should have an aggressive Buy Ontario program for all transit vehicles of 50% of contract value, they would blah-blah-blah about this and blah about that. Eventually, out of the blue, they said, "Here's our law: 25% of the contract value. That should do it."

We think it should be higher. I think most Ontarians would like to keep the jobs here. We're speaking for those Ontarians who would like to keep the jobs here. If Americans can have such a policy, if Mexicans can have it, if most European countries can have it, surely Ontario can have it. And why couldn't you have it? What is wrong with you Liberals on the other side that you are either intimidated, unable, or incapable to go to that rule? What is it about you Liberals? What is it? I can't hear you.

So we have proposed that, and Liberals pooh-poohed the idea. My friend from northern Ontario was supportive of this. Obviously, not enough friends of his supported that, but I think he was on to something and I think he was right. I'm not quite sure why most of you wouldn't have listened to his suggestion. We don't need to name him; he knows who he is. He's right here in this House. But it was a good suggestion, and we've been pushing for that. I'm hoping that enough Liberals eventually will come to their senses and adopt that as a proposal.

We propose as a third suggestion the immediate investment of \$350 million in federal labour adjustment funds in vulnerable communities, directed to vulnerable communities. We should be doing this.

We have pushed for the last four years, with Howard Hampton as our leader, to make sure that we reduce

hydro rates for the pulp and paper mills in northern Ontario, reduce them to the point that those communities can have and maintain those jobs in those industries. We're losing jobs daily in northern Ontario, and much of what they say is, "Look, we don't want loans. We want reduced rates, because that is a big part of our problem." Sure, the Canadian dollar is high, and that's hurting too, but the hydro rates are a big part of that problem, and they've said that year after year. The member from northern Ontario knows this. We've been pushing for that too, for four years, and not many Liberals listened to us in this regard.

And so I have to tell you, I worry about the loss of the manufacturing jobs, and I know Liberals are worried too. What I don't understand is why they are not implementing some of these suggestions that can be theirs. Even though New Democrats are proposing them, once you adopt them, they become yours, they become Liberal ideas, because nobody is going to know who said what. If you adopt them, you can claim as your own anything you want. You do anyway, so why don't you just claim some of these ideas and say, "Yeah, we thought about it. It's a good idea"? Then people will say, "Those Liberals are really smart. They're really smart." They are not going to say, "Oh, they listened to the NDP." No. They're going to say, "Liberals are really smart."

**Mr. John Yakabuski:** Don't push it, Rosie.

**Mr. Rosario Marchese:** Well, that's what I think they're going to say.

So be clever, because, Liberals, in your own opportunistic way, that's what you are. Just take advantage of the good ideas, because that's what you do all the time. That's why I don't understand: Why don't you just steal the good ideas, as you normally do? Just steal them.

Marilyn Churley is here in the assembly, a former member. Welcome, Marilyn.

And so I've got to tell you a few quick things, because the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke talked about Bill 35. I want to link it in to this debate, because the Toronto Star editorial talked about this. What I know is that Liberals quiver when Toronto Star editorials recommend, suggest, to Liberals that they ought to do something. Recall the \$10-minimum-wage battle. The Toronto Star had a campaign for a whole year almost, and they were pushing, never—I mean, look, we don't get much credit from them in terms of our campaign, the \$10 minimum wage. That's fine. We understand. But the Toronto Star had its own campaign pushing for the \$10 minimum wage, and Liberals were so embarrassed that eventually they had to say, "Now we've got to do something." It's not when Liberals push them; it's when the Toronto Star pushes them. The Toronto Star says, "This is good. You have to do it." Eventually, they do it, and then they say, "We're going to roll it out over three years. Now we've done it." The Toronto Star says, "Okay, they listened to us." They've gone away, and the Liberals, happy as could be, say, "We've done it. It's solved." Then they can claim to be revolutionary. Good God, they've raised the rates from here to unseen heights. Nobody else could



have done it. Thank God they're here—they've done the job.

1930

The Toronto Star backed off from a \$10-an-hour campaign. Today, the Liberals couldn't be happier. But what did I read a couple of days ago? It's titled "Duncan's Bill is Flawed." I repeat it for your benefit, not really mine, just to remind you because I know how much you squirm and quiver when the Toronto Star tells you what you don't want to know. They said, "Two weeks before the March 25 budget, Duncan announced that if the surplus exceeds \$800 million when the province closes the books at the end of each fiscal year, the first \$600 million would go to debt repayment and the rest would be divided up among municipalities for infrastructure projects."

Recall that you nice Liberals brought all the various mayors together at a love-in, hug-in, as it were, and they all praised you: "You guys are so great." They actually believed that if there was a surplus, it would actually go to them because that's what you said—that's what you were saying, member from Pembroke—and that's what they believed.

So the Toronto Star, God bless them, read the bill and said, "The Investing in Ontario Act, the bill to implement the municipal infrastructure top-up, is coming up for debate ... at Queen's Park. But a close examination of its contents shows no mention of municipalities or infrastructure." No mention of those two words. Nada. Nihil. Niente. Zero.

*Interjections.*

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott):** I'd ask the member for Trinity-Spadina to address his comments through the Chair, first of all, and you have to speak in one of the official languages as well.

**Interjection:** One of my constituents, they couldn't understand that last part.

**Mr. Rosario Marchese:** So we should limit ourselves to two languages; otherwise, it's problematic to the Speaker and others. I hear you.

To go on—because I've got a couple of minutes—it says, "Nor does it set out the threshold or formula for distributing the surplus money." Jimmy, that's what the Toronto Star says, not me. For your purpose, I say this. Then it says, "Instead, the bill provides that payments may be made to an 'eligible recipient'—defined only as an entity 'that does not carry on activities for the purpose of gain or profit.'" Do you hear what I'm saying, through you, Speaker?

The Star continues, "A spokesperson for Duncan said the particulars will be set out in the regulations." This is what it says in the paper. The editorial says that shouldn't be the way it is, because, they argue, "After revelations last year about the McGuinty government's lax controls on year-end grants to cultural groups, Duncan ought not to leave any room for doubt by stipulating in his bill what will go to municipal infrastructure."

I say this because I am convinced that all of you fine Liberals read that editorial and that you are all nervous. I wanted, for the benefit of the citizens watching, eating

carrots and spinach and so on, and a glass of wine, that that is what is happening with Bill 35.

The municipalities—mon ami M. Miller and all the other mayors that came to give you a big hug, I wonder what they think about your Bill 35. I have concerns, the Toronto Star has concerns and a whole lot of people who read the bill have concerns. Yet you Liberals are unmoved by this political kind of a revelation and you simply will go on to do your merry thing as you've always done. Cities are in trouble. Jimmy, cities are in trouble. You know that; you're a former mayor. All you folks can do is simply say, "We're putting billions of dollars here and there." Your billions never amount to billions. It's always a 10th of what you declare that people are getting—always a 10th, never more. Municipalities are getting 20%, 30%, 40% less than they used to 12 years ago. They have to go to the municipal property taxpayer to make it up because you folks, you the government, are unwilling to help them as they should be helped.

What do municipalities do? They go and whack whomever they can with whatever new taxes—with the power you've given them, including higher and higher municipal property taxes. It's not good. We have shifted away from a progressive income tax system to a new phenomenon called user fees. We're shifting the load from a fair tax system to taxing everyone who moves, whether he can afford it or not, at levels that cannot be afforded by most, and you say that's okay. User fees are not okay. The provincial income tax system was the fairer system, and you people, Tories in particular, and Liberals, are killing it. You're destroying it. You're forcing user fees all over Ontario. That's hurting people on low income and you should be worried about that.

I wanted to say that I'm happy to have had the 20 minutes. I'm looking forward to the Liberals' comments on this.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott):** Thank you very much. First of all, I'm pleased to recognize in the chamber a distinguished former member of this Legislature, a former presiding officer of this House, a former Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations, as well as the member for Riverdale, the member for Broadview-Greenwood and the member for Toronto-Danforth, Ms. Marilyn Churley. Welcome.

Questions and comments?

**Mr. Jeff Leal:** You can always count upon the member for Trinity-Spadina to give a very colourful speech, and he did that again this evening.

I remember those days when I was a lowly city councillor in Peterborough between 1990 and 1995. The member from Trinity-Spadina was the cultural czar for Ontario in those days. I remember he rolled into town, he had that great big Buick Park Avenue, the big 400-cubic-inch V8, the kind that were just great for conservation in those days. He was going from ballet to ballet, from opera house to opera house, but he did take the time to visit us lowly municipal officials in the riding of Peterborough. I remember, he also had the Ontario flags on the front fenders because he wanted everybody to



know that he was the Minister of Culture paying his respects to the lowly people in the great community of Peterborough. He had a big entourage with him too, but that's for another day.

I heard very clearly the member for Trinity-Spadina, and I want to get on the record what he voted against: raising the minimum wage, the auto investment strategy, the advanced manufacturing fund, the forest sector prosperity fund, assistance to Ontario farmers, and he voted against one of the great tools of our recent budget, the 10-year exemption for those new companies coming to Ontario that pick up on innovative research done right across Canada. He voted against it. A guy who from 1990 to 1995 was supposed to foster innovation and development here in Ontario turned right against it. I don't know what happened in the back seat of that Park Avenue during those five years, but he certainly missed the boat by not voting for this budget that's going to advance Ontario's needs.

**Mr. John O'Toole:** I, too, would like to recognize the member for Trinity-Spadina as being an always-entertaining speaker, but not always on topic. The debate tonight was actually on the budget bill and, as usual, I would say everyone is here—in fact, the attendance is up because of your eloquence and entertainment. Good content has always been expressed as his concern.

It's nice to have the member for Toronto-Danforth and Riverdale here tonight as well. Good luck in your future challenges, whatever they may be.

When we're talking about the budget, we always like to look at what the people think. Not unlike the previous speaker from the Liberal Party, we think that it underscores the lack of a plan here. With Dalton yesterday, or the day before, in Hamilton, I think the comment was, "the sermon from Mount Hamilton." I thought that was the best comment about telling people, "Don't worry, be happy."

1940

This is the leader of the province of Ontario. With all due respect, the Premier of the province showing up in Hamilton—with all the 200,000-plus jobs being jettisoned in the economy; families that have to pay the bills: the electricity bill, which is up, the gas, which is up, and dealing with feeding their families and paying the inordinate municipal taxes—for a Premier to show up in a community and tell people basically "steel it out" or "Don't worry, be happy," I'm telling you, it makes my stomach feel a little bit queasy.

Without being disrespectful, we ask for more from our leadership today at all levels. I don't try to presume anything. He must have some strategy which I haven't heard about, a secret plan, a secret recipe. I'm not sure what it is. But to wait it out and to be sending a minister to China to find more jobs for Wal-Mart, I don't get the strategy, and this bill speaks to that very much.

**Ms. Andrea Horwath:** I have to say that it's kind of disconcerting when you have a substantive debate going on and the government members' criticism is brought down to the level of personal attacks and nasty comments

about back seats of cars. I think this Legislature actually deserves a little bit more decorum than that kind of perspective that was brought by one of the former speakers. It's very disconcerting, because what I think the member from Trinity-Spadina did was lay out a vision and a reality that in fact there are other choices that could be made by this government. There are choices that speak to the real needs of real people. There are choices that speak to the quality of life of the people of Ontario. There are choices that other governments and other jurisdictions are implementing in this day and age, in this global economy, today's issues around oil prices and around every other challenge that faces not only our economy but economies across the world. I'm saddened by the fact that the government members can find nothing better to do than make personal attacks against somebody who's bringing specific solutions to the table.

I've got to tell you, coming from a municipality that still sees business education taxes totally out of whack with its neighbouring municipalities—notwithstanding the fact that the Premier was there telling all of us in Hamilton to "steel" ourselves, as the member for Durham just mentioned—we see that our very wealthy neighbours, relatively speaking, in terms of their average income and the taxes they can generate, have their downloading problems solved by this government. Peel, York and Halton don't have to pay social services downloading costs any more, but Hamilton does. That is absolutely unacceptable.

One-time funding here and there, the city of Hamilton coming cap in hand to beg this government every time, every budget year, is just unacceptable. Fix the downloading problem, for now and forever, for all municipalities, not just your chosen few.

**Mr. Khalil Ramal:** It's always a pleasure to listen to the member for Trinity-Spadina speak, even though I don't agree with him—

**Mr. Randy Hillier:** Always.

**Mr. Khalil Ramal:** Always—because I think he's trying to present his party's views.

*Interjections.*

**Mr. Khalil Ramal:** I wish those people from the back row would pay attention so they can know exactly what I'm trying to say.

Most of the time when we talk about the budget, it's important to outline the facts in the budget. I know the member for Trinity-Spadina wants to follow Manitoba or follow different provinces. He has to know that every province has its unique perspective, its unique situations, and depending on those situations, we build the budget.

This was a great budget because it supports municipalities across the province. I want to tell you something very important: In this budget we gave twice the support to the municipality of London. The first time it was \$6 million, the second time it was \$11 million. It was to support our innovation park and our infrastructure. I think it's very important.

Also in this budget is a lot of money for colleges and universities, because we strongly need innovation and



research and a future with jobs. There is a lot of money to support hospitals and nurses, and to support teachers and schools. This budget was spread out to support many different aspects of our society and our economy.

It's unfair for the member from Trinity-Spadina and all the members from the opposition parties to stand up and say that this budget wasn't a good budget. As a matter of fact, if you look at many different leaders in the province of Ontario, from the unions, to teachers, to hospitals, to educators, all of them praise this budget and say it's a great budget because it speaks to the situation in the province of Ontario.

Also, at the same time, we have a lot of money to plan for the future, to train people who have lost their jobs.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott):** That concludes the time available for questions and comments. I'll return to the member for Trinity-Spadina.

**Mr. Rosario Marchese:** I appreciate the comments from friends and foes, as usual.

The member for Peterborough's response was energetic, which is interesting. I'm glad I had the effect that I seemed to have had on him. He remembers me better than I remember him, which is interesting. I'm looking forward to hopping on that train to get to his municipality and seeing more of him in the next little while.

I have to tell you that next year's budget is going to be devastating. If you look at the budget, good citizens, those of you who are watching, this year's budget is projected to be \$200 million more—not billions; \$200 million more. It's a little-known fact that Liberals won't chat much about. It's page 91, actually, if I recall correctly. It shows that most ministries will be flatlined. What does that mean? There will be zero increases. What does it really mean? On the whole, there will be cuts. There will be cuts in most ministries, but the Liberals, at least in terms of their responses, will say, "Well, you know, it's hard. The economy is in dire straits. What can we do?" kind of thing.

They gave away all of the year-end money that they had, which they had to give away by March 31—one-time money. Unlike what the member for London-Fanshawe said—it's about planning—it's not about planning, my friends. There is no money for planning for the future. It's one-time money and it's sayonara. There is no money for long-term planning—not much of it—and whatever it is, it's small, tiny, little amounts of money that people are going to be getting. Those of you who care about these things should keep an eye on what's going to happen this coming year.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott):** Further debate?

**Mr. Gerry Martiniuk:** We're dealing with budget Bill 44, but what really interests me is the budget leaks that have been going on in the province. I'm interested technically—and I probably could learn a great deal from the party that is presently in power—in repetition. In politics, repetition is everything. As a matter of fact, I've been here 12 years now and I remember prior to 2003, Mr. Dalton McGuinty would stand up and chastise and

say, "It's a shame you've closed hospitals." I was sort of looking forward to when he got into power and that was all going to change.

In 2003, when he was in power, I expected to see him reopening these hospitals that he complained about, that were closed. I remember waiting, and I waited all 2003. I'll give you the figure. Zero, that's the figure. That's how many hospitals he reopened.

**Interjection:** Zero.

**Mr. Gerry Martiniuk:** Zero. That is how many Dalton McGuinty reopened in 2003.

*Interjections.*

**Mr. Gerry Martiniuk:** He can stand up if he has a complaint. He can stand up. Be gentle, be gentle.

In any event, I won't be here a long time. As a matter of fact, as Henry VIII said to his wives, "I won't keep you long," and I won't.

So in 2004, all year, I looked forward; he was finally going to rectify this terrible thing that happened under Mike Harris. And how many hospitals did Dalton McGuinty open up in 2004 that had been closed? How many? None.

*Interjections.*

**1950**

**Mr. Gerry Martiniuk:** "He just got into power. You guys aren't being fair."

So in 2005, I thought, "Boy, we're finally going to see some action." All those complaints—and he complained in 2005. I remember him saying, in answering questions, "Well, you guys closed hospitals. Mike Harris closed hospitals." So I figured in 2005, it's a lucky year. This is the year he's going to reopen these hospitals that were closed. And how many did he open in 2005? None. I couldn't believe it. I was really embarrassed for him. We worked so hard, and nothing.

In 2006: He'd been in power for a few years now and I figured he's really got it, you know; he's got the bat, he's going to hit a home run, he is going to open up those hospitals that he complained about all those years, and they closed them. How many did he open up in 2006? Tell me.

**Interjections:** None. Zero.

**Mr. Gerry Martiniuk:** Not one? I must be wrong. Minister Watson, surely you can tell me. He opened up how many in 2006?

**Hon. Jim Watson:** Queensway Carleton Hospital.

**Mr. Gerry Martiniuk:** None, eh? None.

Here we get up to 2007. They've been in power for quite a few years, and he's going to make good. I was losing faith but I still had some faith. This was the year, because he said in 2007, "It's a shame that Mike Harris closed these hospitals." So I knew he was going to do something in 2007. He was going to come back. Well, in 2007, how many did he open? There's only one piece of paper, so I don't have to shuffle papers, but he opened absolutely no hospitals.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott):** Would the member please take his seat. You can't use props, and you know it.



**Mr. Randy Hillier:** On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: Would it be too much to ask all the members on the opposition benches to be awake while the debate is on?

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott):** I don't find that that's a point of order. I'll return to the member for Cambridge, who has the floor.

**Mr. Gerry Martiniuk:** Now we're up to January 2006, and I sat here and listened to a question being asked of the Premier. In answer, he said, "It's a shame that Mike Harris closed hospitals." How many hospitals were opened in—

*Interjection.*

**Mr. Gerry Martiniuk:** This is about repetition. I'm trying to learn from you guys because you're good at it.

In any event, he didn't open any hospitals. So here we go—repetition. How does one leak information? It's great. We had a complaint under the rules about a budget, and it failed. There doesn't seem to be anything like budget privilege anymore. I thought the whole point of having leaks was, of course, to have repetition. But I am trying to learn, and you guys can teach me: How does one leak parts of a budget?

You could do it in a brown envelope. Sometimes they have brown envelopes to be delivered to all the newspapers and all the parties to let everybody know. I don't think it was done that way, because it was only leaked to one party. Do you know what came to mind? I'm going to have to explain this. There was a movie way back when, All the President's Men. I liked the movie. It was during Nixon's time. The reason I'm explaining it to you is because most people are a lot younger than I am and they probably don't remember what it was about. In that movie there was a character called Deep Throat. Deep Throat would sit there and let the news out to these newspapermen, and they always met in a garage. As a matter of fact, there was a complicated series of events. They moved a flowerpot on their windowsill and that way they knew that they should be meeting, and they would meet in this rather dark—

**Mr. John O'Toole:** It sounds like a Liberal plot.

**Mr. Gerry Martiniuk:** No, this is probably the way it happened. I'm just trying to figure it out. I want the mechanics of it. So they probably met in an underground garage and the Premier would be partially in the shadows and he would leak this information to only one reporter, or maybe there was a bunch; I can't really say because I wasn't there. But it was only one newspaper, and that was the Toronto Star. He would go to them and say, "Look, let me tell you, revenues in print media in Canada were down some 50% last month. I can give you a scoop. You're going to scoop every newspaper in Ontario. How's that?" I don't know what the conversation was, but it could have been, "In return you're going to give me repetition, you're going to give me hits." Or it could have been, "You put this on the front page rather than on the third page or the fifth page." Who knows? So, this conversation taking part in this underground garage by our Premier. "Deep Throat" is an interesting—I should go into that. How did they come up with "Deep Throat"? It

was an interesting thing. Supposedly, there was a rather sad movie around, a pornographic movie, in which there was a particular lady who was named Deep Throat and the movie was named after her. But it was also a matter of a play on words of the journalistic term "deep background." There was a play on words, so it wasn't quite as simple as it sounded.

In any event, I don't know what the deal was, but let's see if the Premier drew a decent bargain. Let's see how many hits we got before the budget was released.

The first hit was on March 20, and this was "Poverty Steps ..."—now, this is about six days before the budget. So, hey, we got our first hit on the 18th, actually, not by the Toronto Star but by one of its affiliates, the Record, being a newspaper in my area. So there was the first record I've got of the first hit. So the newspapers are paying off for their scoop.

What I don't understand is, what do the Globe and Mail, the Toronto Sun and the National Post say about all this? They don't say anything at all in the newspapers. They don't criticize. There's no comment at all, which I find really strange because the print media is a really difficult place to be now. They have difficulty in selling newspapers and they have difficulty in selling ads. The younger people are not reading newspapers, they're going to the Net instead. In any event, they got their first one on March 18. Now, "Poverty Steps are Just a Start"—

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott):** I would ask the member for Durham to keep his clippings down on his desk, please.

**Mr. John O'Toole:** No, I was just reading a—

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott):** No, you don't have the floor. I return to the member for Cambridge.

**Mr. Gerry Martiniuk:** Do I get my time lengthened because he was—in any event, March 20: "Poverty Steps are Just a Start." So there's the second hit that they bargained for. I just want to make sure you got your full money's worth for the scoop you gave to the Toronto Star.

March 20: "One Billion Coming...." Oh, my goodness gracious, what a big headline that is. I'm sure these were all on the first and second pages where they would be prominent. That was part of the deal, I guess. March 20, we've done that one.

Another on March 20: "Cities Likely to Get Good News...." You've got three hits on March 20 alone in the same newspaper. That's remarkable. I don't know how they squeezed it in.

**Mr. John O'Toole:** When was the budget?

**Mr. Gerry Martiniuk:** About the 26th.

Infrastructure: March 22, another hit. This time the Premier didn't get into it. It seems like the finance minister was doing a little leaking of his own, meeting in the same underground garage with the same reporters. There he is with a smile on his face. The Star is giving us another hit. They're doing well.



March 24, another hit. March 25, another hit from the budget. I think it's remarkable. I think your Premier has done an excellent job of leaking.

I haven't had so much fun in years. But in any event, you got your money's worth. I'm learning from this party the concept of hits. I wish I had powerful friends like you do at the Toronto Star who could communicate these leaks in such a profitable manner for us.

**2000**

The only other thing I'd like to talk about very briefly is the lack of long-term-care beds being planned for. Dalton McGuinty is taking the Premier Peterson stand of freezing long-term-care beds. Peterson did it in 1988, and we're doing it again. The sad part is that individuals, rather than being able to move into a long-term-care home, end up in a hospital. We've read that 75 hospitals in Ontario have deficits and one of the reasons for the deficits—and I don't like to use the term, but it is used in certain circles—is bed blockers. More and more because of the waiting list to get into long-term care homes, they—

*Interjection.*

**Mr. Gerry Martiniuk:** No, they don't. They stay in a hospital and take up acute-care beds. Each hospital gets, as I understand it, one half the cost of an acute-care bed for each long-term-care resident. However, there's a maximum of six in many hospitals, so they don't get enough. The repercussions of that are twofold. Number one, these people, rather than living in a home, are living in a hospital. That is a shame and this government is directly responsible for this shame. Secondly, by putting them in a hospital bed, it means that bed is no longer available for acute care. Unfortunately, we get into the story of people sitting in emergency wards for 10 and 15 hours waiting for a bed, and they can't get one.

I warn this government that you are really on a slippery slope when you try to save a few bucks by not providing for our mothers, our fathers and our seniors. It will backfire. The bite is substantial. You will find that hospitals go deeper and deeper in debt and the Ontario taxpayer, unfortunately, is going to end up holding that debt.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott):** Questions and comments?

**Ms. Andrea Horwath:** Mr. Speaker, thank you very much for giving me an opportunity to make a few remarks on the previous speaker. I have to say that I spent much of the time of his speech in significant consternation, particularly in regard to some of the illustrations he used in his dialogue. I've got to tell you, in the year 2008 it's kind of difficult to sit in this House and listen to the kind of remarks being made by an honourable member that came up in his speech. Notwithstanding that, it's certainly his choice as a member to use those kinds of references and those kinds of inferences. But I have to say, as a woman in this place, I found it rather distasteful, to say the least, and very disconcerting that here we are in 2008 and that's the level of debate we choose to engage in here. Nonetheless, it's certainly the speaker's prerogative

to think those kinds of things are funny and to make those kinds of disparaging inferences. I would have to say I disagree with them and find them extremely unfortunate.

Nonetheless, I think he did raise a few remarks that were in regard to the actual budget bill that he found to be problematic, and some of them I actually agreed with, when he got to the actual remarks—things like lack of investment in long-term care. Certainly in my community that's also an issue and a problem and something that I would agree with him on wholeheartedly. I wish I could agree with him in a good spirit. Unfortunately, I'm doing so with a bit of a disturbed spirit. But nonetheless, I think it's important to acknowledge that he did bring to the debate some important issues that need to be highlighted, especially the issue around the leaking of the information in documents again; not the way he couched all that, but the reality is that we need to debate these issues from a perspective of equality. I'd like to see that happen much more often in this Legislature.

**Mrs. Maria Van Bommel:** I certainly want to add my thoughts on the comments by the member for Cambridge. Certainly he's very fond of the zero, nil, nada—and I apologize for not using all the official languages. Nevertheless, I want to remind him that in 2007 alone we opened up the William Osler Health Centre in Brampton, which accommodated 659 beds. I also want to mention to him that we had a sod turning in North Bay in 2007.

Earlier today we heard about a chill. Certainly, Woodstock, a neighbouring riding to mine, is getting a new hospital, something it has anticipated and asked for for many years.

When we talk about a chill, however, I was a member of the Strathroy Middlesex General Hospital board when the restructuring committee came through. Just before us was the community of Petrolia, which was in my riding in the last term and is now in the riding of the Sarnia-Lambton member, and the Charlotte Eleanor Englehart Hospital in Petrolia was under threat. I remember very clearly that the community rallied around their hospital and marched down the streets to the hospital to keep it open. It was under threat by the Tory government. They were determined to close it.

Now, under our government, it actually has increased services. It has more beds than it had before. When I was a member, the request was that there be some security around our rural hospitals. Those communities—Wallaceburg, Newbury, Petrolia—now know that their hospitals are there to stay. No one is threatening to close them.

But when you would talk about a chill, everyone was sure we would lose our rural hospitals under the Tories.

**Mr. Randy Hillier:** It was interesting to hear the previous member talk about how the Liberals would respond when they saw marches happening.

**Mrs. Maria Van Bommel:** We didn't see marches. You guys saw marches.

**Mr. Randy Hillier:** Tomorrow there will be another march right here at Queen's Park. Three hundred people or more are going to be marching on Queen's Park, and



they'll be marching here about the Liberal policy—I guess I should take a step back here—about the made-in-China budget that the Liberals have put forward. Of course, the Liberal budget is all about the buy-China policy: Buy a ticket on a junket to China; sell our jobs to China.

Of course I'll have to make reference to the earlier remarks by the honourable member from Peterborough, who was sort of denigrating another member's use of a Cadillac—

**Interjection:** A Buick.

**Mr. Randy Hillier:** A Buick. Of course, under the Liberal government, there will be no Cadillacs or Buicks here. There will be no North American cars here. There will be nothing left of our manufacturing here, as all the jobs are leaving. The honourable member will be happy if everybody drives a Chery car from China. This is the Liberal legacy: Buy a ticket on a junket to China.

*Interjections.*

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott):** Would the House come to order, please? I'll allow the member a few extra seconds to complete his remarks.

**Mr. Randy Hillier:** Mr. Speaker, this budget that the Liberals have presented is a tax-and-spend and kill-our-economy budget, and ship our jobs to China.

2010

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott):** Further questions and comments? The Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

**Hon. Jim Watson:** Let me just comment about what this budget does for health care in my home community of Ottawa. We lost two hospitals under the Conservative government. We lost the Grace Hospital and the Riverside Hospital. The member from Pembroke asked if we reopened the Grace. They bulldozed the building. We couldn't open it. But do you know what we did? We fought, along with our colleagues in the east end of Ottawa, and we saved the Montfort Hospital. We're doubling the size of that hospital in east-end Ottawa, thanks to people like Madeleine Meilleur and Phil McNeely.

We're expanding, in my riding, the cancer centre for the Queensway Carleton Hospital. We're almost doubling the size of the Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario. I remember that the previous government tried to close the cardiac unit of the Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario. Where were the Ottawa Conservatives when the community was fighting to save the CHEO cardiac unit? It's like the silence of the lambs. We never heard from them.

We're proud of our track record in eastern Ontario when it comes to putting money into our hospitals, and we're equally proud of the money we're putting into communities like Smiths Falls. The honourable member who represents Smiths Falls had no input or influence on the fact that their community is getting \$6.2 million. I was very pleased to call the mayor of Smiths Falls, Dennis Staples, and tell him it's the McGuinty government that's delivering for his community and certainly not his own member of provincial Parliament. In 2007,

this government delivered \$60 million to the city of Ottawa. This year, it's \$78 million, including \$20 million under Minister Caplan's program, the MIII program, for a new archives facility in Centreponte.

We've turned the corner on the doom, the gloom and the cuts of the Conservative Party. We're building and expanding health care in the city of Ottawa and throughout the province of Ontario.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott):** That concludes the time for questions and comments. I'll return to the member for Cambridge, who has two minutes to reply.

**Mr. Gerry Martiniuk:** I'd like to thank the members for Hamilton Centre, Lambton-Kent-Middlesex, Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington and the Minister of Municipal Affairs for their comments.

I find it a remarkable coincidence that the only hospital that the Liberal government wanted to reopen had been destroyed. It was probably condemned, but we'll let that one go. I also find it remarkable that all this money is flowing, and I recall that our hospital—we're one of the fastest-growing areas in Ontario. Our population is expanding, the pressures on all services are great and this government had the temerity to stand up and cancel the new wing for Cambridge Memorial Hospital. It took demonstrations in the streets against this government and against your Minister of Health to rectify it. The people rose up and said, "We will not accept this. We will not accept waiting in an emergency ward for hours and hours and hours with our little children. We'll no longer accept what this government wants to ram down our throat." This government, I must say, yielded, and we do have, at the present time, plans for building a new wing at Cambridge Memorial Hospital. I thank you for your attention.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott):** Further debate? I recognize the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal.

**Hon. David Caplan:** I seek unanimous consent to have a recorded division on this motion and to defer the vote until Tuesday, April 15, at the time for deferred votes.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott):** Mr. Caplan has sought the unanimous consent of the House to have a recorded division on the motion and that such division be deferred until Tuesday, April 15. Agreed? Agreed.

Mr. Caplan has moved second reading of Bill 44, An Act respecting Budget measures, interim appropriations and other matters. By prior agreement, the vote on this motion will take place at the time of deferred votes on Tuesday, April 15, 2008.

*Second reading vote deferred.*

Hon. David Caplan: I move adjournment of the House.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott):** Mr. Caplan has moved the adjournment of the House. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

This House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m.

*The House adjourned at 2015.*

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of Ontario**

First Session, 39<sup>th</sup> Parliament

**Assemblée législative  
de l'Ontario**

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**Official Report  
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(Hansard)**

**Journal  
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(Hansard)**

**Thursday 10 April 2008**

**Jeudi 10 avril 2008**

Speaker  
Honourable Steve Peters

Président  
L'honorable Steve Peters

Clerk  
Deborah Deller

Greffière  
Deborah Deller



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# LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Thursday 10 April 2008

# ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 10 avril 2008

*The House met at 1000.  
Prayers.*

## PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

### TIRE DISPOSAL

**Mr. Ted Chudleigh:** I move that, in the opinion of this House, the McGuinty government should agree to define its proposed tire tax as a "tax," like the \$2.6-billion health tax, and the McGuinty government should immediately cancel all plans to implement the \$60-million tax on purchasing new tires, which will impact all Ontarians.

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier):** Mr. Chudleigh has moved private member's notice of motion number 24.

Mr. Chudleigh, pursuant to standing order 96, you have up to 10 minutes.

**Mr. Ted Chudleigh:** This is an interesting resolution. It's an interesting proposal by the government. Opposition to a tire tax does not in any way suppose that I am against recycling, against environmental protection or against environmental legislation generally. In fact, my record speaks for itself. I have been adamant in this House for the past 13 years in supporting the environment, environmental causes and recycling.

My record speaks for itself, going as far back as the Oak Ridges moraine, where I remember voting in favour of protecting the Oak Ridges moraine at the time when the government which I was a part of was not in favour, although about a year later we did pass legislation saying that the Oak Ridges moraine needed protection.

The Niagara Escarpment Planning and Development Act is such that I'm very comfortable with my environmental record going back to land purchases and supporting the environment in those areas as well.

Members across the aisle, I'm sure, will be standing in their place and accusing me of thwarting their environmental cause, and they'll probably try to take credit for being the only party in Ontario that cares about the environment. I want to let the House know that I have grave concerns about those statements.

The environment is rightly becoming a very non-partisan issue in this House. I think that's a very important place for the environment and environmental issues to be. We should stop the games and get on with the meat of the issue: how best to protect the environment without

punishing Ontario consumers and weakening an already hurting economy. The environment and the management of waste is of paramount concern.

I fully support the government's intention to deal with the problems surrounding the disposal of used tires. However, my support ends there; there is no shining city on the hill that we can look to to find a solution to this difficult problem. However, there are a lot of examples around the world that would lead one to believe that there are solutions, albeit piecemeal, that we could adopt. If we took this seriously, we could be the first jurisdiction that selects those successful programs from around the world, and we would indeed become the shining city on the hill that people would look to when they talk about an environmental jurisdiction that says what it does and means what it says.

Once again, I believe this government is trying to impose an unpopular tax. I'm not sure why they would do this. They're calling it a fee, but I don't think that's going to fool anyone. A major point of this resolution is the semantics, that the government insists that this tax is a fee. They do this to avoid looking hypocritical after the Premier promised no new taxes not long ago. Call it what you want; this is a tax, plain and simple. Claiming it's a fee because it doesn't add to consolidated revenues but instead goes to extra-special stewardship programs certainly doesn't change the fact that this fee is indeed a tax or a levy or a duty, or whatever you would like to call it. It's coming out of Ontario's taxpayers' pockets, and when that happens, it's called a tax in my book. I hope that goes down in Hansard and I hope that is regurgitated some time in the future. Anything that comes out of the taxpayers' pocket, whether it be a duty, a fee or a tax, is in fact a tax. There is only one taxpayer, and he's gravely overworked.

A little bit of history on this subject: In 1989, the Liberal government did the same song and dance to try to avoid the word "tax"; that time, they called it a levy. In 1989, the Peterson government brought in the tire tax levy, and it stayed in place until 1993. Then, if you can believe this, under the NDP government, Bob Rae cancelled—

**Hon. John Gerretsen:** Their Bob Rae.

**Mr. Ted Chudleigh:** Yes, he was an NDP member at that time. Bob cancelled the tire tax. Understand the concept of this: This is an NDPer that cancels a tax. The NDP have never met a tax they didn't love, and here they are, cancelling the tire tax. So you know, without a doubt, how insane this tax must be when even the NDP would cancel such a tax.



In 2005, the same games began to be played. The Liberal Party was establishing a long tradition of manipulating words. In 2005, it became such a hot potato that they withdrew the tax before it was implemented. This proposed tax is also another broken promise from the Liberal government. This time, the promise only lasted a few days from the last budget. Despite the fact that they're trying to sneak it in under the guise of a fee or a levy or a duty, it's still a tax.

Improved tire recycling is indeed a desirable thing for Ontario. A tax burden for consumers is not. The government should have consulted with the industry, an industry that is more than ready to talk about recycling. You should have talked to the Recycling Council of Ontario, the Ontario tire recycling association and the Ontario Tire Collectors Association. None of these people have been consulted with this year. None of these people have seen conversations from the government during this session of the Legislature. In discussing this issue with these people, other solutions could have been put forward, and those solutions could have been extremely meaningful. They may not have included a beloved tax for government revenues, but they would have been very, very effective in how they solved the problem. Especially with high public enthusiasm these days for recycling and improving recycling technologies, it is in the best interests of industry to implement profitable recycling programs, and to use and advertise products that include recycled tires or recycled rubber.

It's a matter of how to get there; it's not a matter of how big a tax you can levy against the people of Ontario. Instead of proposing an unpopular tax at a time when a recession—the R word—is looming over the Ontario economy and has indeed taken hold in our largest customer south of the border, at a time when those kinds of things are happening in our economy, imposing an unpopular tax doesn't seem to be the prudent thing to do. This government loves to talk about its prudence, yet it doesn't seem to be the prudent thing to do. We're working in a framework that should encourage new and green businesses, and we're not doing that; we're taxing the consumers of Ontario at a time when they sorely don't need that tax.

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One of my friends here will talk about the tire tax as a safety issue. The more expensive tires are, the more you try to get another few miles out of them, the more bald tires there are on the highways. At least once a week—it seems nightly—I see Sergeant Cam Woolley on the TV news talking about car safety: You should wear seat belts, you should have a safe car, and you should have good tires on that safe car. That's the only thing that touches the road, between you and eternity. So you should have good tires, and this bill will not be encouraging that.

There are a number of industry-led associations, which I have talked about. They are more than willing to consult with the government. Many of them have not been consulted with during this session, and they were very

surprised when this came in. You would think that the government would look at the lessons of history that have been taught about the tire tax. In 1989, it was withdrawn. In 2005, the public outrage was so great that it was aborted. This government is apparently refusing to listen to the stories of history.

If the government truly believes that it wants to implement a tire recycling program, what it would do is consult with the manufacturers, consult with the first importers and, through regulation, have the importers and the manufacturers take responsibility for the disposal of tires through a transparent system. If there are costs involved, those two, the manufacturers and the first importers, should be the ones who move the products through the system and create a transparent system that pays its way through the system.

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier):** Further debate?

**Hon. John Gerretsen:** I'm very pleased to be here this morning to set the facts straight as to exactly what the government's plans are with respect to tire recycling. Let me get one thing absolutely straight. We have an organization called the Waste Diversion Organization, which has been mandated, as a result of a law that was passed about five years ago, to come up with plans that the government wants to initiate from time to time with respect to certain recycling efforts. That's what we're doing in this case. We are giving direction to Waste Diversion Ontario to work with its stewardship organizations, which are basically the manufacturers and the producers—in this case, of tire materials—to come up with a program. Whatever program that they come up with will be totally funded by that organization. How they charge for that by adding it to the prices of vehicles etc. is up to them.

We've done exactly the same thing with respect to hazardous waste, which is a program that's going to be paid for, by and large, by the associations that contribute to the hazardous waste materials etc. In that case, I believe it's an 80-20 split: the municipalities paying 20%, and 80% by the actual producers of the different materials. We're doing exactly the same thing with respect to electronic wastes; in other words, the television sets that we have, the monitors etc., in which case the producers are going to be paying 100% of that cost. None of the money that is required to run these various programs comes from government or goes into government. It goes directly to the various stewardship councils. Those councils in effect will determine who, amongst the various producers and manufacturers, are going to contribute what to the program by way of finances.

I know the member talks about the tire tax that was around 20 years ago, which was a totally different situation. Yes, in that case there was a fee placed on tires, and that money went into the general revenue fund of the province of Ontario. Under the act—as a matter of fact, it was passed while the Tories were in power—Waste Diversion Ontario is mandated to come up with various programs that are going to be funded, again, by the



organizations and producers of the materials that are part of that program. There is no tax; there is no fee. It's a program that is going to be totally funded by the industries themselves that are involved in the tire industry.

We're at the stage now where we're basically giving them direction as to what kind of program we want them to develop over the next little while. So, all the comments from columnists and everyone else—maybe they're all referring to what happened 20 years ago. This is a totally different situation.

There is a cost to everything we do. If we don't do anything, there may be health costs. Right now we have tires stockpiled all over the province that may very well be dangerous from a disease viewpoint—West Nile virus etc. As a matter of fact, we set aside almost \$2 million in our budget to start dealing with some of the stockpiles we have all over this province. There will be a cost. But there's a cost, either to the environment at some point in time in the future that the government has to deal with, or that cost will be allocated today.

But we're getting way ahead of the curve. Until they actually come up with a plan that then will have to be approved by the province of Ontario, there shouldn't be any discussion about a fee or anything like that. It's going to be completely based within the tire industry. How that will work will depend on the plan they're going to develop over the next little while.

I'm sure that nobody is going to disagree with the notion that we should be doing something about the 11 million tires that are being produced in Ontario and are being somehow discarded.

The other thing, quite frankly, that a lot of people are upset about is the so-called environmental fee that many automotive shops charge. Some automotive shops are doing the right thing and making sure that the tires are being recycled. Others just have them hauled away and really don't know what's going to happen to the material etc. We want to get rid of that and make it quite clear to the retail industry that it's going to be unacceptable for them to charge fees that somehow, at times, are being looked at as a government fee, when we all know it really isn't that way.

I just want to make it absolutely clear: What we have done is given direction, or are about to give direction, to the waste diversion organization here in Ontario to come up with a tire recycling program with the various manufacturers and producers of tires. Until they deliver that program to us, some 90 or 120 days from now, we really don't know how it's going to be funded or how it's going to be costed. But whatever the funding arrangements are, none of the money will come into the coffers of government. It will all go into whatever stewardship council is set up to deal with the recycling situation.

**Mr. John Yakabuski:** I'm pleased to join my colleague, Mr. Chudleigh, this morning to support his resolution. I listened with interest to the Minister of the Environment and his undertakings and assurances with regard to this tire tax. He doesn't want to call it that, and he assures us that it won't be a tire tax. But we were all

here in 2003—we weren't here; we were on the campaign trail—when the Premier said, "I won't raise your taxes," and we were here in 2004, when he called the health tax a premium.

So there's a great deal of skepticism out there with regard to whether we can rely on the assurances of the Minister of the Environment, or anybody in the McGuinty government, when they tell us that this is not a tax and won't be a tax and won't be treated as such. We don't have any details, other than the fact that the minister said recently that you're going to be paying more for tires because of some decisions made by the McGuinty government.

This is the slippery slope I'm always concerned about with this Liberal government. It's déjà vu all over again, like the Peterson government: Let's just keep taxing to the breaking point. The problem for the citizens in this province is that under this regime, they're struggling to meet their obligations from a tax point of view as it is.

It's the mindset of this government. They believe that they can always do a better job of spending your money. That's why spending in this province is \$96 billion: because the government wants to take every nickel they can from you, and they believe that they're better stewards of your money. Well, I put it to the government that the people of Ontario believe that they are the best stewards of their money. The importance of recycling and caring for the environment—we all agree on that; there's no argument on that. That's not a partisan issue, and that crosses all party lines. How we get there is important. This government is always looking for more money and more fees, and that's a concern.

**1020**

My friend the member for Halton touched a little bit on the safety issue. As the cost of tires goes up, it is important that we consider, particularly under the taxing scheme of this government—we are aware that it's something people have to go out and buy. Are they going to stretch their tires? Are they going to jeopardize their safety? The two most important parts of a vehicle are your brakes and your tires, because without them, it doesn't matter what kind of shape the rest of the vehicle is in; you've got a dangerous vehicle. If those are not working properly and well-maintained, you've got a dangerous vehicle. We're into an era where people legitimately should have two sets of tires for their car: a set of tires for the summer and a set of tires for the winter. It has been proven over and over again that a vehicle on four snow tires in the winter is a far safer vehicle than a vehicle on so-called all-season tires: The rubber compound is different and reacts differently in cold weather, as well as the traction capabilities of it.

So I'm very concerned that this is just the tip of the iceberg for this government. It's another tax. When they promised no more new taxes—they've crossed that line already; they're going down that road with this tax. I believe it's just the tip of the iceberg, that down the road here—no pun intended; if you have good tires maybe you can get down that road, but for some people they're



going to have difficulty being able to afford them, in this government's regime—we're going to see more and more and more of this, because this government is addicted to spending. It is addicted to spending.

In your own houses, you have limited income, and when you reach the point where your spending is approaching your income or exceeding your income, you have to make adjustments. You can't go to your employer and say, "I need more money." You can't—

**Mr. Peter Kormos:** MPPs did.

**Mr. John Yakabuski:** Well, maybe you can put up a lemonade stand on your front lawn or something. But the fact is, your income is limited. This government believes, "No matter what happens, we'll just raise our income by raising taxes, and we're the guys who come up with the best ideas on how to spend it."

Again I put it to you: The people in the province of Ontario should be trusted to make the decisions with their own spending, and not have to hand it over to the McGuinty Liberals to spend any way they want.

**Mr. Peter Kormos:** Very briefly, I want to tell you that this New Democrat supports this resolution.

Look, down in Welland where I come from, I've been buying tires from Groff Tire over on Niagara Street for years and years and years. It's a unionized tire shop. The Groff family has been running it for half a century now. It seems to me that they charge, if I remember correctly, a tire disposal fee as part of their service, because they, of course, are an incredibly responsible dealership that ensures that the tires are dealt with appropriately. But it seems to me that for the government to stand up and wring its hands and say, "Oh, my goodness, we need this, because after all, where have these tires been going?"—well, that's precisely the question. Where have the tires been going? We have a government that's been in power for over four years. What has it been doing with respect to regulating the disposal of tires that are no longer usable?

The government has been delinquent. The government has been missing in action. The government has been off flitting around on trade missions here and trade missions there and not attending to the serious crisis. I've been here long enough—maybe you remember the Hagersville tire fire? That was during the Peterson Liberal government, the time that the crisis around improper tire storage first exposed itself, in a most dramatic way, to Ontarians. Since then, we've had—I recall the tire lottery. Remember that, Minister of the Environment? Mr. Bradley will tell you all about the tire lottery. Remember the tire lottery? That tire lottery got tired pretty quickly. Ontarians weren't about to buy into it. The question is, where has the government been? The government, it seems to me, has a responsibility to regulate the disposal of waste and exercise it in many other respects of waste generated in our community. Rather than imposing a new tax on hard-pressed taxpayers—

*Interjection.*

**Mr. Peter Kormos:** Well, it is a new tax. You can call it whatever you want, just like, as has already been noted

and will be noted again, Mr. McGuinty wanted to call his health tax a health premium. He figured he was going to weave and dodge and bob his way through. Well, the various adjudicative tribunals shut that down in short order, didn't they? It's a tax. Come on; come clean. Straighten up over there. Call a tax a tax, for Pete's sake. Stop trying to dupe the taxpayers of this province. For once, I would like to see Mr. McGuinty display that rare image of a politician with his hands in his own pockets.

**Mr. Khalil Ramal:** I was looking at the motion. I couldn't find anything new in the motion. Rather, it's confusing. The member from Halton calls it a tax. Maybe he didn't read the component of the program being put forward by the industry and corporations trying to deal with tires in the province of Ontario. I think he is a little bit confused, and hopefully he'll go back to read the whole component of the agreement between the industry and the recycling companies who are trying to deal with tires in the province of Ontario.

I want to tell you this: Last Saturday was good weather; it was beautiful weather. I decided to clean my garage and my basement. I brought the truck and filled it with old couches and metal and many, many different materials from my house. I took it to the recycling facility, called Try Recycling Inc., in my riding of London—Fanshawe. It's a beautiful facility; it's a great facility. When I went there, this company charged a tipping fee. This tipping fee goes directly to the company to try to segregate the products, whether it's couches or metals or lamps or glass or whatever. They charge a fee for that. Do we call it a tax? No. We call it a fee for the company. In the same way, this program has been put by the industry that produces tires, by many different organizations across the province of Ontario that deal with recycling tires in this province.

I think it's a very important initiative, and it's important for our health. I still remember, when I came to Canada in 1989—I was a recent Canadian back then—I heard about the big, huge fire in Hagersville, where thousands and thousands of tires were burning for almost 17 days. Can you imagine the cost and the cause and many different aspects of those burning tires to the environment, for health, for many different things around us? It was very dangerous. I think it's very important to deal with the issue now rather than in the future, especially now, when you go into the countryside and you see a lot of tires in many places. As you know, sometimes those tires are a very safe haven for West Nile, to create diseases, and not good for the environment—not good for the ground, not good for the health of human beings, for animals, for insects, for many different things. It's very important to have some kind of mechanism in order to deal with the issue.

The member from Halton wants to call it a tax. How can it be a tax when this money does not go to the government coffers or treasury? This money only goes from the industry to the non-profit organization to deal with the issue; it has nothing to do with the government. Therefore, you cannot call it a tax. It's a fee to deal with



it; it's not a tax. The only time we call it a tax is when it comes to the government's treasury. Since it does not go to the government treasury—that's it.

**Mr. Toby Barrett:** I am pleased to speak to this tire tax resolution. We're told there's something like 11 million or 12 million used tires created every year, and they end up stockpiled, buried in landfills or shipped out of the province to be burned as fuel. I know there's a proposal for a major tire-burning facility just across the lake from me, in Erie, Pennsylvania.

1030

One problem is, nobody really knows where a lot of these tires go, and it is unacceptable that we're the only province in Canada that does not have a tire recycling program. That being said, I don't feel it's necessary for people in Ontario to be hit with yet another tax. I really feel that there's nothing worse than implementing a tax like this one, under the guise of environmentalism.

David Peterson tried such a program. He brought in the tire tax, as we heard, in 1989. That was ineffective. Essentially, it was dishonest to the point that Bob Rae rescinded it in 1993. Imagine: It was such a bad tax that even the NDP, under Bob Rae, were forced to become tax fighters on that particular levy.

This government touted its latest budget as being tax-free, and then, only a few days later, we're pondering the idea of slapping a \$4 tax on every tire sold in Ontario—again, shades of the infamous health tax that this government brought in after the 2003 election. At least that one was announced during the 2004 budget.

I'm in favour of a recycling plan, but I sincerely doubt the commitment of the minister opposite with respect to any kind of plan on recycling. We have before us a trial balloon being pushed out the door. I feel that taxpayers could accept this tire tax if this government had acted in good faith to start. But again, what can we expect? We constantly think of that so-called health tax. Regardless, to deliver a so-called no-new-taxes budget very recently and then a few days later come up with something like this, we're just left with the image of nothing more than a tax grab.

Back in 2005, when this issue reared its head through Waste Diversion Ontario, Premier McGuinty told reporters at that time, "There will be no tire tax. Everybody get that one?" Those are his words. Just six months ago, prior to last October's election, the same Premier was still against a tire tax. Just like the infamous health tax, Premiers say one thing before the election and the opposite after the election.

There are alternatives that could accomplish the same: something as simple as using the stick of a tire tax. In fact, the Ontario Tire Collectors Association proposed a plan in 2005: (1) bring in a system of consumer-based, buy-recycled rebates similar to those provided for the purchase of energy-efficient appliances; (2) we need a system for registering tire collectors and tracking the disposition of collected scrap tires in order to prevent these tire stockpiles; (3) having said that, we do need a stockpile inventory moratorium and a remediation program;

and (4) manufacturer or producer responsibility, whereby funds used for rebates, market development, research and development, scrap tire collector registration, program monitoring and administration would be provided by brand owners and first importers of tires into the province.

I believe in a tire recycling program; I'm not convinced that this government does. If you want to implement a program, take a look at the alternatives that have been presented before us, because people in this province really can't afford more to end up getting less. We do learn from history. History has shown us that taxing consumers is not really the way to go. Let's have a little more carrot on this one and a little less stick.

**Mr. Michael Prue:** On this particular issue, I went back and tried to read a little bit of history. Too often, there's too much history in here. Everybody yells back and forth about what the other guy did 20 years ago.

But I went back to look at why there was a tire tax in the first place. It appears to me that although it was properly motivated all those many years ago, the problem with the government of the day was that they flowed the money to general revenues. The money did not go into a dedicated tire tax to get rid of the tires at the end. That's what made the consumers mad, that's what made the people angry, and that's why it was eventually abolished. I would hope that, whatever the government plans, they never again put that money into general revenue because, as my colleagues the Conservatives here are saying, it will never be approved or supported by the populace.

I went back as well to look at what the government did in its last term of office, to try to get some indication and figure out where this minister is heading in the pronouncements that were made in the last couple of weeks, and I find it perplexing and a little troubling because I had to read what the last Minister of the Environment had to say. Less than a year ago, on April 20, 2006, in a speech to Waste Diversion Ontario, of which the minister spoke so highly today, the then Minister of the Environment, Laurel Broten, confirmed the death of the tire recycling program. She stated on that date:

"Turning now to the used tire diversion program, I want to thank WDO"—Waste Diversion Ontario—"and Ontario Tire Stewardship for your commitment to finding more innovative solutions to this difficult issue. We have carefully reviewed the options on how to proceed and I have decided to defer the finalization of a used tire program for the immediate future." That's what the minister said.

Fifty weeks later we have some musings about going somewhere else.

**Hon. John Gerretsen:** Two years later.

**Mr. Michael Prue:** Okay, two years later we have musings about going somewhere else. In those two years, what did the government do? The first thing they did was to give permission to Lafarge at Bath, Ontario, to burn the tires in their kilns. Now, some people would say, "Well, the tires are gone. They've been burnt." But the effect of that government action was to enrage the envi-



ronmentalists. The environmentalists in the immediate area formed a group called the Loyalist Environmental Coalition. They went out and tried to stop this government and Lafarge, which was burning the tires in their kilns, from doing that, because they thought it was a really bad environmental action. They went before the Environmental Review Tribunal and that tribunal agreed to a hearing. Then, as soon as the tribunal agreed to the hearing, Lafarge took them—the environmentalists—to the Divisional Court to stop the hearing of the appeal, which is where it is today.

Now we have musings of a tire tax or something. And I should say that the government has also placed a temporary ban until the pilot project, as they put it, in Bath is reviewed. I don't know how that's going to be reviewed. By the government? By the Divisional Court? By the Environmental Review Tribunal? I'm not sure who is reviewing it at this point, but certainly the government—the reason that it's all there—has to take the major responsibility for giving permission to burn the tires in the first place.

We in the NDP absolutely support sustainable tire recycling. It has to be supported. We have to be able to get rid of the waste tires. I don't have to tell you, because I'm sure all members of this Legislature, especially in the spring, in these months, go out into the fields and the ravines and the creeks and the valleys in their own jurisdictions, as I will be doing next week and the week after, to clean up all the stuff that has been dumped there. And every year when I go into those valleys and creeks around the Don Valley and in my riding, we find tires. We find people who have dumped those tires. Even though it was clean and pristine the year before when we finished, we find more, and I'm expecting to find more. Those tires are an environmental hazard. Not only do they leech chemicals into the soil but they are also pretty good breeding grounds for mosquitoes, and we all have to be worried about West Nile and other diseases.

1040

I want something to be done, the NDP wants something to be done, but slapping a fee on consumers at the end of the process won't change the behaviour of the producers. We have to do something other than simply charge those who need the tires on their cars to do so. We prefer, in our party, an extended producer responsibility. That is exactly what we want, but we're not very trusting, because of past government actions. We want an extended producer responsibility where the producers take responsibility for the life cycle, including disposal.

**Hon. John Gerretsen:** That's exactly what this is about.

**Mr. Michael Prue:** No, it's not.

**Hon. John Gerretsen:** It's exactly what it is.

**Mr. Michael Prue:** That isn't what I'm hearing from you. It's not what I'm hearing from you and that's not what this motion is.

Everybody is worried about who is going to pay for it. If the consumers are going to pay for it, we have some

real difficulties with that. If the producers are going to pay for it, then it may be a very good thing.

Okay, we believe that this will help the producer re-engineer the processes. We believe that it will reduce waste. We believe that the reducing of use of dangerous chemicals will also be a net result of taking the appropriate action.

Progressive jurisdictions around the world have adopted this. In this jurisdiction, in Ontario, up until two years ago their only solution was to burn the tires at Bath. I would think that if this government has learned anything from that mistake, it is that we cannot continue to go down that road.

This government has a pretty dismal record to date. I am hoping this minister will turn it around, but I want to tell you the dismal record on waste diversion: There's been a dismal record on taking things out of landfill sites, a dismal record on landfill sites themselves and a dismal record on developing an environmental plan. In spite of years of asking, "Where is your plan? When are you going to commit to a plan?" we haven't seen one from this environment minister or the preceding one.

There's also a side effect to all of this. One of my first jobs as a very young man of 17 years of age was working in a place called Dunlop. Dunlop produced all kinds of rubber products. Mostly I worked where they made hand-rails and conveyor belts and things like that. Dunlop used to, in Canada, produce huge numbers of tires. Bridgestone used to produce huge numbers of tires. Goodyear used to produce huge numbers of tires. All of these groups are gone. All of these tire manufacturers are no longer in Ontario.

I would think that if we developed an environmental plan that is sensitive, if we put restrictions on the tires, this will have a net effect of having producers come back to Ontario, because we would not allow, I would think, tires that were built in other jurisdictions that did not meet the standards to be sold here.

I am hoping that a government will go even further, beyond how to dispose of them, but how they are to be built so they can be more environmentally sound, so that they will cause fewer problems to the environment, and that would force producers to produce tires like that and, hopefully, to produce those tires here in Ontario.

**Mr. Speaker,** I'd like to leave some time for my colleague from Toronto—Danforth, who has arrived, to speak about this issue because I know how important it is to him and how passionately he cares about the environment. So I would just simply conclude by stating that we will be supporting the motion before us today. If the protestations coming from the government side are right, we look forward to seeing a real environmental plan. We look forward to seeing extended producer responsibility in a government bill and not simply the musings of putting a tire tax on consumers, because if there is anything that is not going to work, that is not going to work.

**Mr. Tony Ruprecht:** I'd like to thank the member from Halton for raising the issue of tire recycling, but let's see what he says here. He says there's going to be a



"proposed tire tax," and furthermore that there are plans in place to implement a "\$60-million tax on purchasing new tires."

I don't know where he gets this from, but I would hope he will address what he says here and tell us just where he gets that information from. I'd like to know.

Then we've got the member from Haldimand-Norfolk that there's going to be a tire tax of four dollars on each tire. I'd like to know where he gets his information from.

It is clear: There is a letter being sent from the Ministry of the Environment to Waste Diversion Ontario to come up with a plan to issue or to produce and to develop a tire recycling program. That's great; that's what our interest is here. That's the plan now, and we're moving in the right direction.

We've got to come up with a tire recycling program right now, as all of us know. Why is this an important issue? Because Ontario is the only province in Canada that doesn't have a tire recycling program. Note this: Not one dollar is going to the government, as you indicated. Not one dollar is going to the government coffers. It stays.

Finally, let me say something to the member from Beaches-East York. He's right when he says, "Let's look at the ravines. Let's look at the pristine countryside"—we do find a number of tires. Just go to Sutton, Ontario—just south of Sutton, near the 7th concession. Boy, I was surprised the other day. It was beautiful before, and now, a bunch of tires: big tires, small tires, bald tires—all kinds of tires. What are we going to do about this? They're saying to me, "Mr. Ruprecht, do something about these tires."

We're here today—and the ministry should be thanked—to try to come up with a plan so that Ontario joins the other provinces in terms of developing a tire recycling program.

**Mrs. Joyce Savoline:** I rise today in defence of the people of Ontario, who are not fooled by the McGuinty government's use of the words "user fees." I support recycling tires, but not in the absence of a concrete plan. I don't believe in sugar-coating things for my children, and I definitely don't believe that the government should try to sugar-coat yet another tax to be paid for by the citizens of this province.

User fees are directed into ministry budgets from which they arise. Taxes like the health tax, and now this tire tax, go directly into general revenue coffers. It is the very definition of a tax. But why should the taxpayers care which bottomless pit their money is deposited into? Is this just semantics? People should care because ministries have a greater chance of utilizing this tax for the purposes for which it was intended, instead of vote-buying, spending frees and slush funds. You may be interested to know that this announcement—

*Interjection.*

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier):** Would the member for Hamilton East-Stoney Creek come to order.

**Mrs. Joyce Savoline:**—about this tax is coming as quite a surprise to the stakeholders in the industry. Stakeholders in the tire recycling business have been working on an anticipated stewardship program designed to track and account for every tire slated for recycling in this province. This is precisely how government budgets and spending balloon out of control. When government takes over a project versus supporting a private sector initiative, everyone loses. I believe in letting the professionals handle this—the people who have studied tire recycling for years, developed consensus between the stakeholders and decided on a reasonable plan with manageable time frames. Once again, the McGuinty government has ignored public input from the leaders in their field and pushed ahead, like a bull in a china shop, with their own hidden agenda to tax the people of Ontario within an inch of their life.

Why has the government made no mention, until this morning, of this stewardship program that they led the stakeholders to believe was a done deal? Perhaps they ran the figures and preferred to have that money in their own pockets rather than in the private sector partners who actually want to achieve something on this issue.

My colleague Laurie Scott, together with PC Party leader John Tory, organized a waste summit in the month of June in 2006. This summit brought together the brightest minds in the waste diversion business and their municipal regional partners with the goal of creating real and significant waste diversion targets and processes across this province. This initiative fell on deaf ears, like the stakeholders in the recycling industry. The Premier and his government appeared to know best. Well, this daddy-knows-best routine is not fooling me, it's not fooling anyone in the opposition benches and for, sure, it's not fooling Ontarians.

We want to see well-constructed programs with benchmarks, deliverables that produce real results for hard-working people who are making this financial sacrifice in hopes of providing a better future for our children and grandchildren. I urge the government to go back to the drawing board on this proposal. Take the time to do this right. Meet with the stakeholders who have put a significant amount of time and energy into developing an effective program and take their feedback to heart.

Our children and our grandchildren are counting on us to get this right. Let's not throw another tax their way, one that does nothing to treat the root cause of the issue. Quite frankly, they deserve better, and so do we.

Fool me once, shame on you; fool me twice, shame on me. Ontarians will not be fooled again, again and again.

**1050**

**Mr. Peter Tabuns:** Essentially, we are being asked by this government to trust them. I don't know about you, Speaker—actually, Speaker, I know you're in a more difficult position than some of us.

I checked my watch when I asked the time from the Minister of the Environment, because the simple reality is, time after time, promises have been made and broken on substantial issues that matter to people in this



province. Stopping the burning of coal was promised in 2003—nope. At the time, now-Premier Dalton McGuinty said that he was going to stop burning coal. The environmental movement said, “What about nuclear power plants?” It was a complete promise: No new nuclear power plants. What are we doing in Ontario? Full-tilt nuclear.

In 2003, he promised waste diversion—huge action. It’s 2008; we’re at 28%.

For years, the Auditor General and the Environmental Commissioner of Ontario have been saying that laws in this province for the environment have not been enforced. We have people here from Hamilton today from Environment Hamilton with photos of pollution going on in that city today, and they are not getting satisfaction.

So the question I have for everyone in this House is, why on earth would we believe that you’re actually going to do something useful with that? Put forward legislation for us to consider, allocate the money where necessary to make sure that things happen, and then perhaps we could say that there’s something real on the table. All we have is this trial balloon of this proposed tire tax. If you want to do something about waste diversion and waste reduction, you have to put the responsibility, first of all, on the manufacturers so that they re-engineer for recovery of materials.

*Interjection.*

**Mr. Peter Tabuns:** “Check,” says Mr. Hoy. I think the simple reality is that your history has been one of taking the money and putting it into general revenue when you’ve had a tire tax in the past. You’ve been very open to burning tires; maybe that’s the ultimate plan—just put on a tax, and then pay for the shipment to cement kilns in who knows where. Are you in fact going to do what you say you’re going to do? Your history on this, the history of your government, is extraordinarily poor. People from Hamilton and people from all over the province know that you can’t be trusted on this file.

**Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn:** It’s a pleasure to join the debate today. I think I’ve heard a variety of opinions. It might help if we started dealing with some of the facts around just what has been done and what maybe are some of the things all members of all parties could agree with.

The concept of environmental stewardship has become an accepted concept within the environmental movement and, I think, in society at large. That simply states that when you manufacture a product, you have a plan in place to cover its safe disposal, so that you have stewardship over the entire life cycle of that product. The reason for that, of course, is that in the past that hasn’t been done. Some of the young people who are in the chamber today—their future hasn’t been guaranteed by any form of environmental stewardship, so we’ve got products that are in circulation today that we’re just developing plans to deal with.

If you look at what we’ve been able to do—in the very short years, from the McGuinty government, you’ve seen a hazardous waste plan introduced, you’re seeing an elec-

tronics waste plan introduced; and I’ve consulted with the tire recyclers myself. I’ve toured Canadian Ecorubber in Brampton. It’s a wonderful operation owned by Halton Recycling, of all places.

Now, 10 million to 12 million tires are generated every year in the province of Ontario that we need to deal with. Some of them currently are recycled; some of them are exported for use as tire-derived fuel; some are retreaded; some are exported for use as tire-derived fuel; some are retreaded; some are exported for sale and some are used for landfill cover, but the sad fact of the matter is, a lot of them are just stockpiled and a lot of them are dumped. What we and the Minister of the Environment are saying is that we need a plan to deal with that. He’s consulting with the industry as to how that plan should be implemented and what it should look like.

What I find confusing about the motion that’s before us today is that the Minister of the Environment has been very clear that he does not want a tax. What he wants is for the industry, under the concept of environmental stewardship, to cover the cost of the program. The motion before you today from the member from the Conservative Party from Halton is saying that he wants a tax. It says, “That, in the opinion of this House, the McGuinty government should agree to define its proposed tire tax as a tax....” We on this side of the House, and certainly I as a private member today, are saying we don’t want a tax; we want the industry to cover its own costs. We want the industry to take responsibility for the products it’s producing and the products it makes a profit from.

We’re very, very, clear. I don’t think we need to take any lessons from the other party. Their record on the environment is clear. Look at what the Conservatives did to the Ministry of the Environment, how they cut staff, fired hundreds of ministry staff, fired water inspectors. Take a look at Walkerton.

If you look at the NDP record, they, too, when they had the opportunity, cut the budget of the Ministry of the Environment. They voted against bringing back energy conservation programs, voted against the Clean Water Act. I could go on and on. I don’t think we need to take any lessons. The past record of your party, Michael, speaks volumes.

**Mr. Michael Prue:** You were a member of the NDP then.

**Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn:** That’s when it was a decent party. That’s when you had a leader.

It’s quite clear that we have an option before us today as members: If you want to vote for a tax, you support the private member’s bill; if you don’t want further taxes, vote against it.

**Mr. Jim Wilson:** I just want to thank my colleague the member for Halton, Mr. Chudleigh, for bringing this motion forward. For once, maybe we’ve caught the government before they brought in a tax. Mr. McGuinty obviously said he wouldn’t be raising our taxes, and then he brought in the health tax. You just had a budget. You said you weren’t going to be raising taxes, and now you propose to bring in another tax. Mr. Chudleigh is doing the people of Ontario a favour.



Don't try to hide it in the guise of the industry covering its costs. It's a tax. You'd need to be an idiot to think otherwise.

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier):** The member from Halton has two minutes to respond.

**Mr. Ted Chudleigh:** "There will be no tire tax." Did everyone get that? "There will be no tire tax." Mr. McGuinty, June 3, 2005. The minister says the discussions with the industry are starting, but he's already got the number out there: \$4, \$5, \$6—maybe it's going to be \$10 or maybe it's going to be \$12. The number is already out there. They can't wait to get their hands on that tax. If this debate this morning turns the corner on that desire from this government to feather their nests and get that \$5, \$10 or \$15 tax into the general coffers—

**Hon. John Gerretsen:** Oh, now it's going up. I see.

**Mr. Ted Chudleigh:** Oh, it's going up like a sky-rocket. When you start measuring the dollars it's going to attract, I'll be amazed if your government can hold itself back from reaching out for that money. Basically, we don't have a plan yet, but the money is out there, the \$5, the \$4, the \$6, the \$10.

We've heard a lot of very good ideas this morning. The solution to this problem is to work with the industry, to work with the manufacturers. Before you put the tax on tires, you should work with these people, first importers and manufacturers, and come up with a transparent system that will allow the industry to solve the problem. You don't need a tax to do that. You don't need a fee to do that. You don't need a levy to do that. You don't need anything out of the taxpayers' pockets to do that. All you need is some well-thought-out and co-operative standards for the use of the industry when they come to implement government regulations. The only thing you really need is regulations, along with industry cooperation, and you're only going to get that through discussions.

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## VISITORS

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier):** The member for Hamilton East–Stoney Creek advises that we have some guests in the members' west lobby today. From Environment Hamilton, Linda Lucasik, executive director; from North Hamilton Project, the manager, Brenda Johnson; and we have Lorna Moreau and grandson Nicklaus Moreau from Concerned Citizens. Welcome to the Ontario Legislature.

## NOWRUZ

**Mr. Reza Moridi:** I would like to thank you for the opportunity to move this resolution today: that, in the opinion of this House, the government of Ontario must demonstrate, in its promotion of diversity, the acknowledgement of the first day of spring, which may be anytime between March 20 to March 22, as Nowruz.

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier):** Mr. Moridi has moved private members' notice of motion number 20.

Pursuant to standing order 96, you have up to 10 minutes. The floor is yours.

**Mr. Reza Moridi:** Nowruz is the ancient Iranian festival of spring. In harmony with the rebirth of nature, the celebrations begin at the exact moment of the vernal equinox commencing the start of spring. Nowruz is the new year among Iranians and always begins on the first day of spring, which may be any time from March 20 to March 22, at the exact moment when the sun enters Aries.

Nowruz ceremonies are symbolic representations of the ancient concept of rebirth. At the beginning of spring, the festival of Nowruz signifies rebirth, hope, peace and prosperity, and is a time of great joy and celebration. The name comes from Avestan, meaning "a new day," and it was officially acknowledged and named Nowruz by the mythical Persian emperor Jamshid Shah. Its non-ethnic and non-religious characteristics are the precise reason for the fact that Nowruz is still prominent outside the political boundaries of modern Iran and is widely celebrated in various central Asian countries, such as Afghanistan, Turkmenistan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and the republic of Azerbaijan; in parts of Pakistan, India and China; and in the Kurdish regions of Turkey, Iraq and Syria.

Nowruz is the beginning of the official calendar of Iran and Afghanistan and is the official new year in Iran, Azerbaijan and Afghanistan. It has also been adopted as the official new year feast by the Baha'i faith, due to their roots in Iran. Ismaili Shiite Muslims, who trace their origin to Iran, also celebrate Nowruz.

Nowruz, with its uniquely Iranian characteristics, has been celebrated for at least 3,000 years and is deeply rooted in the traditions of the Zoroastrian belief system. The main characteristics of Nowruz involve such specialties as feasting, visiting friends and relatives, the giving and receiving of gifts, wearing new clothing and, most importantly, the Haft Sinn table. The Haft Sinn table, which represents the arrangements of seven items, begins with a special piece of cloth of the highest quality draped over a table, upon which lays a mirror and seven specific items whose names all start with "s" in English—"sinn" in Persian.

The number seven has been considered as sacred in Iran since antiquity, and the seven dishes stand for the seven angelic heralds of life, rebirth, health, happiness, prosperity, joy, patience and beauty. The symbolic dishes that are displayed on the Haft Sinn table consist of sabza, which is sprouts of wheat or lentil, representing rebirth and life. Samanu is a pudding made of wheat sprouts and transformed to a sweet, creamy pudding that represents the ultimate sophistication of Iranian cooking because of its complexity. "Seeb" means apple and represents health and beauty. Senjed is the sweet yet dry fruit of the wild olive and represents love and passion. Seer, which means "garlic" in Persian, represents medicine and good health.



Somaq, which is a berry, represents the colour of sunrise with the notion that the god sun conquers evil. Serkeh, or vinegar in Persian, represents age, patience and wisdom.

To reconfirm the symbolism of Nowruz expressed by the traditional foods of the Haft Sinn table, I must represent the other elements and symbols that are also placed upon the Haft Sinn table. Books of tradition and wisdom are essentially laid out with great pride. These tend to usually be a copy of the holy Koran and/or scripts or a book of the poems of Hafez, the great Persian poet and philosopher. A few coins of gold colour, representing wealth, and a basket of painted eggs, representing fertility and rebirth, are also placed on the Haft Sinn table.

Goldfish swimming in a bowl of water represent the great Anahita, the angel of water and fertility, which is the main purpose of the Nowruz celebrations. The fish also represent life and, most importantly, the end of the astral year associated with the constellation Pisces.

A flask of rosewater, known for its magical cleansing power and wonderful scent, is also included on the Haft Sinn table. Pots of flowers or willow branches, figs, pomegranates and/or olives are all significant in representing time. Nearby is a brazier for burning wild rue, a sacred herb whose smouldering fumes are said to ward off evil spirits.

On either side of the mirror are two candelabras holding a flickering candle for each child in the family, representing enlightenment and happiness. The mirror represents the past, present and future and is a reflection of creation as we celebrate the first day of spring, or Nowruz.

Typically on Nowruz, family members gather together around the Haft Sinn table and await the exact moment of the arrival of spring. At that time, gifts are exchanged.

One of the most important rituals celebrated during Nowruz is that people are expected to pay house visits to all their family members, friends and neighbours, and to complete this ritual before the 13th day of spring. Typically, the youngest visit their elders first, and elders return their visits later. The visits naturally have to be relatively short, otherwise one will not be able to visit everybody on their list. Every family announces in advance to their relatives and friends which days of Nowruz are their reception days. Some Nowruz celebrants believe that whatever a person does on Nowruz will reflect on the new year. So if a person is warm and kind to their relatives, friends and neighbours on Nowruz day, then the year will be a good one. On the other hand, if there are fights and disagreements, the year will be a bad one.

Also, many people do a significant amount of spring cleaning prior to Nowruz to rid the house of last year's dirt and germs in preparation for a good new year.

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The 13th day of the new year festival is celebrated and called Sizdah Bedar, meaning "13 out"—of doors. It often falls on, or very close to, April Fool's Day. People go out into nature in groups, spend all day outdoors and celebrate in the form of family picnics. It's a day of festivity in nature, where children play and music and

dancing are abundant. On this day, it is customary for young, single women to tie the leaves of the sabzeh, prior to discarding it, symbolizing their wish to be married before the next year's Sizdah Bedar. When tying the leaves, they whisper their wishes for the coming year.

Nowruz is an all-encompassing national ceremony which many nations feel emotionally attached to. It's considered to be the unveiling of the gates of happiness and the strings that bind many nationalities—more specifically, all Iranians—to a lovingly observed feast of a new beginning, a new season and a new year.

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier):** Further debate?

**Mr. Peter Shurman:** I am pleased to rise in this House, on behalf of the diverse residents of my riding of Thornhill and of the Progressive Conservative Party, to speak to the issue of recognizing the first day of spring as Nowruz.

The first comment I have is: what a civilized idea. For most of us in this chamber, our idea of celebrating the new year is popping a bottle of champagne at 12 o'clock plus one second on January 1, looking outside into the dead of winter and saying, "Let's celebrate." I find that rather hard.

This is a refreshing idea—the first day of spring as the new year—because I think most of us feel renewed at this time of year. And it's indeed civilized because, as my friend from Richmond Hill has said, this dates back thousands of years, so it's built into a civilization.

It's an interesting holiday. It is a tradition of Persian people to celebrate the new year in this way around the world. Iranian and Turkic peoples of all kinds attend—in fact, I myself had the opportunity to attend Nowruz celebrations earlier this week, and I thank the member from Richmond Hill for his hospitality extended to me in his riding. This event was attended by people from Richmond Hill, which features a prominent Persian community, as well as people from my own riding of Thornhill and other ridings, primarily in the northern 416 and the southern 905 regions, where a lot of Persian people live. I met Persians, particularly from Mr. Moridi's Richmond Hill riding. They made me feel particularly welcome. I even had an opportunity, which I politely rejected, to dance with a belly dancer. I didn't think it was appropriate, but I had a nice chat with her, thank you very much.

Each year, this country welcomes over 250,000 newcomers. Most of those individuals choose to settle within the greater Toronto area, which makes us rather amazing and rather special, and that is no more evident than in ridings like Richmond Hill and Thornhill, in the near 905.

I can tell you from personal experience and from a bit of a count that in Thornhill alone there are approximately 145 different languages spoken. What a refreshing thing it is when a member of this House can rise and say, on behalf of a community, "Let's be inclusive, as opposed to exclusive. Let's not find a reason to reject the culture that



exists. Let's find a reason to offer a culture that we bring and make it inclusive."

It is my job, and indeed it is my pleasure, as official opposition critic for citizenship and immigration, to now be actively involved in a growing number of communities within the greater Toronto landscape. In fact, it surprised me to find that, in my opinion, it's one of the best parts of being a member of provincial Parliament. You find out things you would otherwise never have a chance to know.

Let's be direct and honest about who we all are. It doesn't matter who you are in this House, and it doesn't matter who you are in Ontario; we all come from immigrants. If any of us looks at our family, we can't trace more than 200 or 300 years at most, and usually a lot less than that, to discover what our roots are, and these are things to be celebrated. Canada is an amazing country in that way, and no more so than in places like Thornhill or Richmond Hill.

Statisticians tell us that the GTA will become a megalopolis of over 10 million people within the next 20 years or so. That growth is being driven by newcomers.

Mr. Moridi, the member for Richmond Hill, and I had a chance to have dinner at a recent event one-on-one. His own particular case, which I'm sure he is too modest to discuss—and I hope I'm not embarrassing him by saying this—speaks to what I am discussing today. Mr. Moridi immigrated to Canada in 1991 from Iran, and 17 years later, this gentleman joins us as a member of provincial Parliament in this House. What does that say about the openness of Ontario and the ambition and ability of a new immigrant, now fully integrated in our society as a member of this august body?

Indeed, for the first time ever, the number of visible minorities in Canada has surpassed the five-million mark and now accounts for 16% of the country's population. Furthermore, over 70% of us—of us, I say—will be visible minorities. Think about that. It means that a snapshot of the average Canadian is the face of anyone anywhere in the world. You can't say that anyone looks like a Canadian any more or any less than anyone else.

Let's think about people in other lands considering making Canada their new home. That requires self-reliance and it requires courage. Integrating requires even more courage, because it says, "Let's reach out to the broader community and ask them to come inside and take a look," and it invites us to do the same in return. That makes us better and it makes us all Canadians. Actually, making the move demands exceptional strength of character, determination, and the love and support of family. For them, failure can never be an option.

We believe that most people want less intrusive government, a chance to retain more of what they earn, a strong support system that rewards success, and a well-woven net to catch those who occasionally need a hand. I believe these values are shared by all of our newcomers.

It makes sense, in an Ontario where the face of the average citizen is changing, that we would recognize the celebrations of cultures now calling our province home. That is why I support this resolution brought forward by

the member from Richmond Hill. He doesn't ask for a provincial holiday; we already have one of those. He just asks for recognition, and it is worthy of the support of all people in this chamber.

As a society and as a nation, we are continuing to grow. We're continuing to develop, and we're continuing to deepen our understanding of one another. This is a place where people of very different backgrounds, languages and religious beliefs come together. We try very hard—with some bumps in the road, admittedly—to build unity from our diversity. We share our values, we share our traditions with one another, and in doing so, we learn much, much more about ourselves.

When I'm outside of Canada, people often say to me, very notably in the United States—and I'm very pro-United States—"You would be a citizen of the United States if you could, wouldn't you?" And I say no. And their answer to that is, "But this is the greatest country in the world." And my response is, "Well, I think my country is the greatest in the world, and I admire you for thinking the same of yours."

I wouldn't be a citizen of any other place, and I'm sure that everyone here would agree with me that, given the opportunity, anybody anywhere in the world other than Canada would become a Canadian.

This is a place where we can participate in each other's traditions without losing a sense of our own. Indeed, the traditions of other Canadians become our own.

For thousands of years, the people of Persia and beyond have celebrated the important holiday of Nowruz, regardless of religious background or affiliation. The tradition of bringing family and friends together for joyous celebrations to mark the start of a new season and new year is a good one. Nowruz, Farsi for "new day," is a celebration of all that is good in life. It promotes belief in the hope for a better tomorrow. This is the Canada that I know: one that can welcome newcomers. This is the Canada that I want.

The sense of hope embedded in Nowruz is very important for newcomers, as we're still a long way, as a society, in Ontario—this is an emerging society, in a very different way than we speak of when we look at countries around the world. Newcomers to our province continue to face discrimination when it comes to accessing employment, educational opportunities and housing opportunities, and it is the business of all parties in this House to address these inequities on a daily basis, as we all try to do from our separate vantage points.

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As I stated in the House this week, ethno-racial minorities or non-European-origin families make up 37% of all families in Toronto but account for 59% of poor families. Between 1980 and 2000, while the poverty rate for the non-racialized European heritage population fell by 28%, poverty among racialized families rose by 361%; and 32% of children in racialized families and 47% of children in recent-immigrant families in Ontario live in poverty. We can't allow that to go on. Our demographics are changing, they're changing rapidly, and it is



time for us to decide to work harder at the business of living together.

This resolution presents an invitation as opposed to a rejection. This is not someone from another culture coming into our culture and saying, "You have to do this." This is someone bringing a piece of his culture to us and saying, "Can we integrate this into the fabric of this great province of Ontario and this great land of Canada?"

It's time for our shared beliefs in family, responsibility, community concern, success through hard work and being socially involved and responsible to return Ontario to the unstoppable and productive core of Canada that it once was, thanks to the remarkable immigrant builders of years gone by.

Our newcomers bring fresh perspectives to our communities and energy to us with their new ideas—new to us—and their new ways of thinking, and we need to listen. I am proud to live in a country and a province where individuals from many different cultures can pass their traditions to future generations. The diversity of Ontario brings joy to our citizens and strengthens our province, during Nowruz and throughout the year.

As Persian, Turkish, Kurdish, Afghani, Pakistani and Turkic Canadians of Thornhill and Ontario set Haft Sinn tables, which symbolize health and happiness and prosperity, I wish them all Nowruz Mobarak and the best for the year ahead.

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier):** I hesitate to interrupt debate, but some of our visitors are here with us for just a short time. In the public galleries, the member for Toronto–Danforth advises me, we have students from the Duke of Connaught elementary school. Welcome.

We also have in the members' gallery Mr. Hassan Zerehi, editor-in-chief of the *Shahrvand* publication, and Dr. David Farmani of the Farmani law office. Welcome to the Ontario Legislature.

Thank you for your indulgence. Further debate?

**Mr. Paul Miller:** Salam. The oldest of Iranian traditions, Nowruz, also referred to as "eyd-i sar-i sal" and "eyd-i sal-i now," recalls the cosmological and mythological times of Iran. Its founder is the deputy of Ahura Mazda on earth, a position that imparts to him the celebration of a spiritual dimension and a particular sense of secular authority. The celebration is organized according to the dynamics of love between the creator and his creation—the material world.

The annual return of the spirits of the departed to their homes is celebrated by their offspring according to ancient rites, of which only a faint trace remains among the Persians and Parsees of today. But that in no way diminishes the importance of the bond which is refreshed at every Nowruz.

The word "Nowruz" is a compound of two Persian words—"now," which has the same root as the English word "new" and means new, and the word "ruz," which means both day and time, literally meaning the new day. Nowruz is usually translated as "new year." The Persian Nowruz begins on the first day of spring, usually March

21. March 21, therefore, is equal to the first day of Farvardin of the Islamic solar calendar.

In the mind of Iranians, the word "Nowruz" invokes colourful images which are sumptuous, elegant and opulent, as well as delightfully simple, refreshing and cordial. Although coloured with vestiges of Iran's Mazdian and Zoroastrian past, the Nowruz celebration is neither religious nor national in nature, nor is it an ethnic celebration. Jewish, Zoroastrian, Armenian and Turkish Iranians and central Asians celebrate the Nowruz with the same enthusiasm and sense of belonging. Perhaps it is this very universal nature of the message of Nowruz that speaks to its wealth of rites and customs as well as to its being identified as a unique fount of the continuity of the Iranian culture.

It is indeed an honour to rise today to speak to this motion. Nowruz, as we know, is a joyous celebration of renewal and a hope for the future, bringing family, friends and community members together to mark the new year and to mark spring. After the winter we just experienced, I'm more than happy to support this.

Nowruz is the beginning of the year for the people of Iran, Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Iran, Tajikistan and a few of the Asian republics of the former Soviet Union. Also, the Kurds in Georgia, Iraq, Syria and Turkey celebrate Nowruz as the new year festival. In Iran, Nowruz Day celebrations are a symbol of resistance, as celebrations were banned for many years.

Many communities where people from these countries have settled get to join in the celebrations. It is this rich history, diversity and tradition of these people that makes our province strong and vibrant.

New Democrats are committed to ensuring that all Ontarians have the freedom and opportunity to benefit from the possibilities we have here. This includes maintaining good jobs, a healthy economy, protecting publicly funded, high-quality health care and education systems, and fighting for a living wage.

We hope that Nowruz marks a renewed effort to work hand in hand to make positive changes in our province, with our government and with our opposition.

To all those observing this day, New Democrats extend their best wishes for a healthy and prosperous new year. Nowruzetan Mobarak.

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier):** The member—well, she's the Minister of Education, but—

**Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne:** She's the member for Don Valley West.

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier):** The member for Don Valley West. I was kidding.

**Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne:** It is with much delight that I take this opportunity to extend my support to my colleague Dr. Reza Moridi MPP, the member for Richmond Hill—my parents' member; he represents my family—to support his motion that the House resolves that the first day of spring be proclaimed as Nowruz, the Iranian new year. I think this is a wonderful initiative and I so appreciate his bringing it to us.



I am so pleased to speak to this motion because I'm certain that there are so many constituents in my riding of Don Valley West who have just completed the festivities of Nowruz and would join me in supporting this motion. So it's with their energy and their support that I come forward today to speak to this.

Nowruz, as the member opposite has just talked about, is the new day. It's one of the oldest seasonal celebrations of the world. Being a resident of a country that is relatively young, it is always fascinating to me, having been born here. I can only trace my roots in Ontario back four generations. We are a young nation and I come from a family that has not got a long history here. So to know about a society and celebrations that go back 2,500 years, which is the archaeological record for Nowruz, I think, back to the Achaemenian period, it's really very profoundly interesting to us as Canadians to see the mix of cultures and to understand the different celebrations.

The people of Iran, Afghanistan and Azerbaijan collectively celebrate Nowruz as their new year. In Iran and Afghanistan, March 21 marks the beginning of the official calendar in both those countries. Nowruz is also widely celebrated in various central Asian countries such as Turkmenistan, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, part of Turkey, Pakistan, India, China and the Kurdish regions of Iraq and Syria.

I think it's important for us, watching our culture enriched, to know where these celebrations come from and how broad they are. Nowruz has also been adopted as the official new year feast of the people of the Baha'i faith. Due to their roots in Iran, Ismailis also celebrate Nowruz worldwide.

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In Ontario this year, where we are, Nowruz celebrations included the fire festival, which is called Chahar Shanbeh Souri, the magnificent Nowruz party at Queen's Park—where there was no standing room; it was just packed; it was wonderful—and the outdoor celebrations of Sizdah Bedar.

The member for Richmond Hill talked about the Haft Sinn table. I don't know how many people in this chamber have actually seen a Haft Sinn table, but it is beautiful and inspiring. At the celebrations that I have been so privileged to attend over the last few years, I am always drawn to the Haft Sinn table, just because it's usually cold—this year it was particularly cold outside—and there's a light, sparkling warmth and life that comes from the Haft Sinn table: the fish swimming in the water, the beautiful decorations, the flowers, the white tablecloth and the mirror that lets the candlelight glance off it. It's just a beautiful, beautiful thing to behold. I know that people who celebrate Nowruz have a version of the Haft Sinn table in their own homes. It's like, in our celebrations, a beautiful Christmas tree or other decorations—symbols of our faith and culture that we put out to celebrate. But this is a particularly beautiful symbol of life and I hope that everyone will have a chance at some point to see a Haft Sinn table.

In 2003, the Honourable David Caplan introduced legislation to recognize the first day of spring as Nowruz,

and MPP Mario Racco, a couple of years ago, introduced the Nowruz Day Act. So I think it's very fitting that the first Iranian-Canadian parliamentarian elected to this Legislature would be bringing forth this motion. It's an important day for MPP Reza Moridi and for those Ontarians who celebrate Nowruz, and I congratulate him on his initiative, and on his election, I think, as the first Iranian actually elected to a Legislature or a Parliament in North America.

I urge everyone in this House to support this resolution, and I think we will have that support.

As the Minister of Education, I want to talk just for a moment about how critical it is in Ontario, this pluralistic province of ours, that we work to understand each other's cultures, that we pay attention to the meaning of the various symbols of different cultures and that we help our children to understand those differences. We've just come through an election that made it crystal clear that people in this province expect that our publicly funded education system will be the place where our children weave together a common value system. I think with the kind of initiative that Mr. Moridi is bringing forth today, and the fact that in our publicly funded schools many of the celebrations that we talk about in our various cultures are celebrated, children learn about the various cultures and celebrations. That's one of the ways we can help each other to understand the value system and start to understand how we celebrate and what we celebrate.

I honour Mr. Moridi for bringing this forward—thank you so much—and look forward to unanimous support of the House.

**Mr. Ted Chudleigh:** Just briefly, one of the great privileges as an MPP is to learn about traditions like this from around the world, other cultures which you may not otherwise learn about. It's interesting that we have the opportunity in Ontario to weave them into our traditions and, by doing so, create a very inclusive society. We're reading petitions almost every day about the removal of the Lord's Prayer from this place, which ignores the tradition of this place and creates an exclusive society. In this case, with this motion, we are creating an inclusive society which weaves into our own strong traditions.

There's an interesting fact that I came across the other day. The diversity that Ontario has, with the number of people and the number of different countries that are represented and the volume of those people who are represented in the GTA, and indeed Ontario and Canada—particularly in the GTA and Toronto, that diversity is greater than any other city in the world. The only other city that even comes close—it does not surpass it—was New York City in the 1910 era, when they had the same kind of diversity that we have today. I must say that the atmosphere, the openness and the inclusiveness of our society in Toronto far exceeds that of New York City or, indeed, any other city you would like to compare it to around the world. I'm very proud of our tradition in that area.

**Mr. Peter Tabuns:** It's my pleasure to rise in support of this resolution by the member from Richmond Hill. There's no question that expanding our cultural heritage,



expanding our recognition of the celebrations of all the peoples who have come to be part of modern Ontario, is in fact an advantage for us, a pleasure for us and an honour for us. So I'm glad that the member has taken this initiative.

It is kind of extraordinary to me that we in Ontario have benefited both from the triumphs and the difficulties of cultures from around the world. Iran, since the 1950s, has gone through many upheavals: the overthrow of Mohammed Mossadeq, the revolution against the shah, the war with Iraq. In each instance, we have had people come from Iran of talent, of ability, who have built this society, who have enriched it and who, in this motion today, are introducing another part of their culture into the larger mainstream culture of this province.

We've benefited tremendously, and I think it's to our advantage here in this Legislature to support this resolution and make this part of Ontario's fabric.

**Mr. David Zimmer:** I really want to thank the member from Richmond Hill for asking me, and indeed I'm honoured, to speak in support of this resolution.

I can tell you that this motion to recognize the first day of spring as Nowruz Day is something that is sorely needed here in Ontario. Ontario citizens of Persian descent have made huge and significant contributions to enhance the social, economic and cultural fabric of Ontario.

In my riding of Willowdale, there's a very prominent Iranian-Canadian community. They've graciously invited me in and involved me in their various activities in the community, along with my other colleagues here in the Legislature.

Within the community, Persians are making significant contributions in the area of academia and science, business and arts. In fact, many businesses in Willowdale are owned by Iranian Canadians, and they are engineering businesses, importing businesses and manufacturing businesses. I've attended many Iranian-Canadian business networking sessions.

There's also a very significant presence of Iranian-Persian-Canadian scholars, professors trained at the master's levels and Ph.D. levels. They're at York University, the University of Toronto, Ryerson and other universities throughout Ontario and Canada. In my years, from Willowdale, I've come to know these professionals on a very intimate basis, and they do make a tremendous contribution to our economy.

In that regard, I do want to take a moment and just point out and demonstrate that the distinguished member from Richmond Hill, Reza Moridi, is an example of that. He's a qualified physicist. He's a qualified architect. He has a Ph.D. in nuclear physics. He's been honoured by nuclear engineering societies in the United Kingdom and Canada; in the UK, he's a fellow of those organizations. He's participated in many ways in the nuclear business and the nuclear academic world. He's the author of over 150 articles on that subject.

Nowruz in Persian means "new year's day." It's a celebration of the equinox at that time of year. You've heard from previous speakers about what a significant

event this is. Members, by supporting this motion to formally recognize the significance of this event and the contribution of the Iranian community in Ontario—it's a tremendous contribution to recognizing our multicultural society.

**1140**

Acceptance and recognition of cultural holidays enables citizens to keep their identities and take pride in their ancestry. It creates a deep, deep sense of belonging. That deep, deep sense of belonging and that deep, deep recognition of Nowruz will provide to the Iranian-Persian community that we are recognizing the contribution they make to our society.

**Mr. Jim Wilson:** I too want to join my colleagues in the Progressive Conservative caucus in congratulating the member for Richmond Hill for bringing this motion forward. I certainly intend to support it. I think you're going to get unanimous support.

I just want to say, on a personal note, following up on what the member for Willowdale has just said, that we are very, very fortunate to have Mr. Moridi come to Canada and come to Ontario.

In addition to having a Ph.D. in physics, the member for Willowdale forgot to mention that Mr. Moridi is vice-president and chief scientist of a Canadian independent organization that promotes radiation safety in the health care sector, in industry and in the environment; a member of the advisory council of the medical physics program at Ryerson University here in Toronto; a member of the council of the Royal College of Dental Surgeons of Ontario; editor of Health Physics, the radiation safety journal; a member of the Richmond Hill intercultural committee; and, of course, when you're my size, a member of the Taste of the Hill committee, which I'm sure is one of his more enjoyable events. Congratulations to you.

I've learned a lot—sometimes in these private members' mornings, you don't learn too much. I didn't know much about Nowruz until the motion came forward and I was forced to do some research, and I thank you for that. I thank you for bringing your culture to our province.

**Mr. Tony Ruprecht:** First of all, congratulations to Mr. Moridi, MPP for Richmond Hill. He has a motion today, as we all know, which says that we acknowledge the first day of spring as Nowruz.

Members have already very eloquently expressed the meaning of Nowruz, but there is something that needs to be added to information that has already been expressed, and I recommend to members that they also look at the interesting book called *Toronto's Many Faces*.

The book says this about Persian culture: "Hints of ancient Persian culture can be unearthed around Toronto: Persian musicians playing the santoor, and theatrical troupes' regular performances at Toronto's theatres. The Persian traditional art and cultural foundation of Ontario has organized a number of events, including international folk song concerts, a Persian traditional concert to commemorate Ontario's bicentennial, arts exhibits and cultural seminars, and an international congress on Persian heritage to celebrate the 800th anniversary of the birth of



Saadi, Iran's and Persia's greatest poet. The foundation now has a library, and is going to open a community centre."

**Mr. Khalil Ramal:** Who's the author?

**Mr. Tony Ruprecht:** The author is Tony Ruprecht. But I'm not going to tell you that, because I'm not supposed to. I'll put the book down right now.

I want to make a few points in addition to the members who have eloquently expressed Nowruz.

Nowruz is really something much bigger. While we think of spring, we think of newness. But we also know that that spring and newness—and Nowruz—are connected to the great religious symbol of fire.

When we look at the old temples in Persia, we find that the old priests who were celebrating Nowruz were also trying to ensure that the grand flame in the temple was never extinguished. That's the connection between the flame, expansion, newness and spring, and that, of course, is part of the Zoroastrian religion. It presented and represented power. It represented expansion.

The Persian priests, the Zoroastrian priests, knew something that is very important, which we're just rediscovering today. They said, and I checked this with Mr. Moridi already: "Look into the smallest part of a particle, the smallest part we can identify, and you will discover a brilliant sun. The atom was thus born 3,000 years ago."

What is just as important is the realization from this very fact of the atom—the realization that the Newtonian mechanical universe has come to understand that it is only one part of reality; there's another spiritual reality to life, and that's what we should be looking at today as well, when we celebrate Nowruz. It is a spiritual reality.

Who talks about this? I am very surprised. The people who talk about Nowruz and the spiritual reality are: Max Planck, the German physicist who was a Nobel Prize recipient; Sir Arthur Eddington, from England; and Sir Jeans, also from England. A lot of physicists are discovering right now that it isn't just a question of looking at the material Newtonian world; it's also a question of looking at the spirit. They say, for instance, that when we celebrate Nowruz, we should always also think that there is a spiritual reality that is just as powerful as when we look at our reality through our senses. So there are two ways to look at the world: Nowruz when we think of spring; Nowruz when we think of fire expansion; Nowruz when we think of newness in life; and Nowruz when we think of newness within ourselves. Nowruz: It's a great principle of the ancient times of Persia.

So, my friends, I say today that as we celebrate Nowruz, we must not only look at the physical world alone, but we must also look at the spiritual foundation, which is just as real, because we, through consciousness—Persia talked about this—are bringing as much to reality as is out there by itself. When the two come together, the physical and the spiritual, we have a great feast called Nowruz. On that, we want to congratulate the 200,000 people in Ontario who are celebrating this great feast. They remind us that we are not only physical, but we also have a spiritual dimension to our lives.

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier):** Further debate? There being none, Mr. Moridi, you have two minutes to respond.

**Mr. Reza Moridi:** I would like to thank all the honourable members, from Thornhill, Hamilton East–Stoney Creek, Don Valley West, Halton, Toronto–Danforth, Willowdale, Simcoe–Grey and Davenport, who spoke about this resolution today.

The Iranian community in Ontario is relatively young. Members of the community began immigrating to Canada in large numbers starting in the 1979 revolution in Iran. Since then, the community has established itself in Canada. Today, the Iranian community is a dynamic and vibrant part of the fabric of Ontario, contributing to every aspect of our society.

The Iranian community is proud of having distinguished individuals who have been making significant contributions to our province of Ontario in areas including, but not limited to, the following: journalism, law, law enforcement, academia, research and innovation, arts, medicine, dentistry, pharmacy, manufacturing, engineering, export and import, construction, real estate, restaurants, small business, trades, community services, civil service and, of course, politics.

This resolution is a very significant symbolic initiative for the Iranian community, as well as other Ontarians from various ethnic, cultural and religious backgrounds who celebrate Nowruz every year. Despite its Iranian characteristics, Nowruz actually can be easily celebrated by all the people of Ontario.

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier):** The time for private members' public business has not yet expired, so we will suspend proceedings until 12 of the clock.

*The House suspended proceedings from 1149 to 1200.*

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier):** The time provided for private members' public business has expired.

## TIRE DISPOSAL

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier):** We shall first deal with ballot item number 11.

Mr. Chudleigh has moved private member's notice of motion number 24. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those in favour, say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

After dealing with the next ballot item, we will call in the members.

## NOWRUZ

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier):** We shall now deal with ballot item number 12.

Mr. Moridi has moved private member's notice of motion number 20. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

*Agreed to.*



## TIRE DISPOSAL

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier):** Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

*The division bells rang from 1201 to 1206.*

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier):** Mr. Chudleigh has moved private members' notice of motion number 24. All those in favour, please stand until recognized by the Clerk.

## Ayes

Barrett, Toby  
Chudleigh, Ted  
Elliott, Christine  
Hardeman, Ernie  
Hudak, Tim

Jones, Sylvia  
Klees, Frank  
MacLeod, Lisa  
Miller, Norm  
Savoline, Joyce

Shurman, Peter  
Sterling, Norman W.  
Tabuns, Peter  
Wilson, Jim  
Yakubski, John

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier):** All those opposed, please stand until recognized by the Clerk.

## Nays

Aggelonitis, Sophia  
Albanese, Laura  
Arthurs, Wayne  
Balkissoon, Bas  
Best, Margaret  
Brotten, Laurel C.  
Brown, Michael A.  
Brownell, Jim  
Bryant, Michael  
Cansfield, Donna H.  
Carroll, Aileen  
Colle, Mike  
Delaney, Bob  
Dhillon, Vic  
Dickson, Joe

Dombrowsky, Leona  
Flynn, Kevin Daniel  
Fonseca, Peter  
Gerretsen, John  
Hoy, Pat  
Jaczek, Helena  
Jeffrey, Linda  
Lalonde, Jean-Marc  
Leal, Jeff  
Levac, Dave  
Mangat, Amrit  
McNeely, Phil  
Meilleur, Madeleine  
Mitchell, Carol  
Moridi, Reza

Naqvi, Yasir  
Pendergast, Leeanna  
Phillips, Gerry  
Qaadri, Shafiq  
Ramal, Khalil  
Rinaldi, Lou  
Ruprecht, Tony  
Sandals, Liz  
Smitherman, George  
Sousa, Charles  
Van Bommel, Maria  
Wilkinson, John  
Wynne, Kathleen O.  
Zimmer, David

**The Deputy Clerk (Mr. Todd Decker):** The ayes are 15; the nays are 44.

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier):** I declare the motion lost.

*Negatived.*

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier):** All matters relating to private members' public business having been dealt with, I do now leave the chair. The House will resume at 1:30 p.m. of the clock.

*The House recessed from 1209 to 1330.*

## MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

## PARKINSON'S DISEASE

**Mrs. Christine Elliott:** April 11 marks World Parkinson Day, the day when the global Parkinson's community asks us to consider the plight of our citizens diagnosed with this debilitating neurological disease that robs them of their independence, their mobility and their livelihood.

Parkinson's is a complex neurological condition affecting 40,000 Ontarians and their families. This number is expected to double in the next 10 years, and it is therefore an issue that we must concern ourselves with urgently. Parkinson's is often thought to be a disease of

the elderly, but we now know that simply isn't true, as more and more are diagnosed in their 20s, 30s and 40s, when people are most productive in building careers, raising families and contributing to our communities.

Parkinson's strikes randomly with no preference for gender, race or lifestyle. We don't know how to predict, prevent or cure Parkinson's, but we can work to keep those battling the disease as healthy as possible for as long as possible.

Over the past year, some of us have had the pleasure of meeting with Ontarians living with Parkinson's in our ridings. They have educated us about the Parkinson's experience so that we might consider their needs as we develop policies.

In preparation for World Parkinson Day tomorrow, I commend these Ontarians with Parkinson's who are working to educate their fellow citizens, and I commend Parkinson Society Canada for the work it does to educate, advocate and invest in the research that will discover new treatments and, one day, uncover the cure for this insidious disease.

## LAKESHORE LIONS ARENA

**Ms. Laurel C. Broten:** Residents in my community of Etobicoke-Lakeshore should take great pride in the groundbreaking ceremony for our new Lakeshore Lions Arena that was celebrated two weeks ago. The first arena to be built in Toronto in the last 25 years, this 260,000-square-foot, state-of-the-art community facility will encourage active lifestyles, make hockey accessible to youth, and support the growth and development of one of Ontario's favourite sports.

The new four-pad arena will have 1,000 spectator seats, a full-service public restaurant and community meeting rooms, and will also provide 500 hours of free rink time for Toronto District School Board students. Reaching new levels in youth outreach programs, the Toronto Maple Leafs will also be using the arena to run hockey development programs like the Toronto Maple Leafs Hockey School.

Not only is the new Lakeshore Lions Arena beneficial for the active health and well-being of Ontario's youth and community members, it's energy-efficient. With a heat recovery central piping system exchanging energy from heat pumps, the arena is designed to significantly reduce utility costs.

I want to take the opportunity to recognize the project's alliance between the not-for-profit Lions Club, with the hard work of members like Bob Harris and Brian Hoskins, Giffels Design-Build, Maple Leaf Sports and Entertainment, and the Toronto Marlies. I want to recognize the efforts of our Toronto District School Board trustee, Bruce Davis, and our councillor, Mark Grimes.

I stand today as a proud member of my riding, not to mention the mother of the two boys—potential future hockey players—to applaud and engage Ontario's youth in healthy sports-based lifestyles, which in this case will bring hockey one step closer to home.

## TEACHERS

**Ms. Sylvia Jones:** Last night, I had the honour of attending the Greatest High School Teacher awards ceremony at Humber College Institute of Technology and Advanced Learning. Three teachers were chosen from essays written by Humber students. Each student wrote about how their teacher influenced them and made positive changes in their lives.

Tom Lewis from King City, Tina Rowe from Toronto and Lindsay Lemaire from my riding of Dufferin-Caledon should be congratulated on receiving this prestigious award.

Lindsay Lemaire teaches at Orangeville District Secondary School in Dufferin county. In addition to working as a guidance counsellor, Lindsay teaches computer science and business courses. The student who wrote the winning essay, Amber Kuliszewski, was also thanked at the award ceremony.

As part of the award, Lindsay will be asked by Humber to choose an ODSS student who has been accepted to go to Humber this fall to receive a tuition scholarship for the first two semesters. I would like to acknowledge Amber's willingness to take the time and effort to write the essay, which now gives one lucky ODSS student free tuition for their first year at Humber.

As Michael Hatton, vice-president, academic, at Humber College, said, "To be nominated by one of your students as a great teacher, someone who made a significant difference in the life of that student, is the best recognition in the profession."

Again, congratulations, Lindsay Lemaire, on achieving this outstanding accomplishment, and Amber Kuliszewski, for writing the winning essay.

## ORVILLE KERR

**Ms. Andrea Horwath:** I rise today to pay tribute to a legendary figure in Hamilton's history. Orville Kerr was a prince of a man, and he passed away this past winter at the age of 96.

Right until the end, Orville Kerr remained a stalwart, a devout activist and fighter for social justice, as well as a good friend to me, my party and the community of Hamilton.

A very thoughtful, old-school gentleman who was the consummate friend of working people, Orville Kerr was a lion-like figure in the founding of the historic Steelworkers' Local 1005. He championed better wages and working conditions that continue to benefit Hamilton workers to this very day, and he was a titan in the infamous Stelco strike of 1946.

Life was very difficult for those hard-working men and women on the picket line, as scabs were being driven in and brought in by boat to do their jobs. Some of the strikers were arrested on frivolous charges, but thankfully, Orville was there, and his outstanding reputation for integrity was easily enough to convince the judge to dismiss all charges against the strikers.

People trusted Orville, and he never let them down. Though life brought him his share of personal tragedies, losing two wives and a daughter, Orville was always like sunlight breaking through the clouds. His presence was illuminating and enlightening.

He will be very much missed by all those who knew him. He will always be one of the heroes of Hamilton and of our very rich labour history.

PETERBOROUGH LIFTLOCK  
ATOM HOCKEY TOURNAMENT

**Mr. Jeff Leal:** I'd like to recognize and congratulate past and present organizers of the Peterborough Liftlock Atom Hockey Tournament as they celebrate their 50th anniversary this year. This peewee tournament, which began in 1958 with only eight teams registered for a one-day event, has grown to become a 128-team tournament which spans five days, utilizing the arenas in the city and surrounding county.

On the tournament's 35th anniversary in 1993, a Greatest Hockey Legend game was played in Peterborough. That included such greats as Maurice and Henri Richard, Frank Mahovlich and Norm Ullman. The tremendous success of this game has resulted in a repeat performance each year at the opening ceremonies.

Over the years, this tournament has changed to accommodate more teams and changing rules, but one thing has remained constant: the hard work and dedication of hundreds of volunteers needed to put on the world's largest weekend atom hockey tournament.

From the first chairman, Mr. Neil Clark, to Jack Guerin to Howie Eastman to Alvin Philips and to our current chairman, Mr. Steve Casey, this tournament continues to receive international recognition in excellence. None of it would be possible without the enthusiasm of the volunteers who come back year after year to make the Peterborough Liftlock Atom Hockey Tournament a fantastic experience for the children who compete each year.

Congratulations to everyone involved. My son, Braden, who's 10, actually participated in the tournament this year.

## GOVERNMENT APPOINTMENTS

**Ms. Lisa MacLeod:** If you're a Liberal member, a Liberal donor or even a blogger for the Liberal cause, then you might be entitled to your entitlements.

Perfecting the now famous phrase from ex-Liberal cabinet minister David Dingwall, the McGuinty Liberals have managed to ram through several of their best supporters onto the province's ABCs, including eight who have, together, contributed close to \$10,000 to the Liberal cause, and one even ran as a Liberal candidate—all this in just four weeks.

Who, you might ask, are these eight entitlements? Well, I'll share them with you:



—Sivam Vinayagamoorthy, a pal of the Minister of Small Business and a GTA Liberal blogger, rang in at \$3,817;

—Mina Grossman-Ianni, a buddy of the Ministers of Finance and Economic Development, \$2,568.58;

—Karen Lowe, a booster to the Huron–Bruce Liberal MPP, \$1,560.01;

—Yusra Siddiquee, a supporter of Gerard Kennedy, 500 bucks;

—Gemma Salamat, a Liberal supporter who, according to her, was told by the Minister of Health to apply, \$218.99;

—Lynn Graham, a supporter of the Minister of Municipal Affairs and the Liberal MPP for Ottawa Centre, \$210;

—Erica Curtis, a supporter of the Minister of Culture, 200 bucks; and

—Joan Loughheed, a former Liberal candidate in Burlington.

In just four weeks, I can say, eight entitled Liberals is enough.

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#### SAINT-PASCAL-BAYLON

**M. Jean-Marc Lalonde:** Cette année est le 100<sup>e</sup> anniversaire du village de Saint-Pascal-Baylon. Saint-Pascal-Baylon is where the current Florida Panthers' hockey coach, Jacques Martin, was born. It is also the town where I was born.

Cette petite paroisse a une histoire riche de folklore franco-ontarien. À compter de 1908, nos ancêtres arrivèrent de la région de Montréal, de Vaudreuil et de Deux-Montagnes. Dès 1854, dans les registres du comté de Russell, on retrouve des noms francophones sur le territoire The Lake : les Guindon, les Durocher, les Richer, les Pilon, les Lalonde et cetera. Ces Canadiens français achetèrent les terrains des anglophones, qui les ont obtenus de le Couronne et qui les considèrent sans valeur et non cultivables. Ces terres, riches en minéraux laissés par l'eau lors de chaque débâcle printanière, sont égouttées et transformées en terres fertiles grâce aux labours et à l'acharnement de nos ancêtres.

Au milieu du 19<sup>e</sup> siècle, quatre fromageries et quatre écoles faisaient partie du village. Aujourd'hui, les paroissiens se rendent à l'extérieur pour gagner leur vie et ils sont heureux de revenir à leur patelin, jouir du calme et de la tranquillité de la campagne.

This Sunday, April 13, is the launch of the souvenir book on the parish titled *Histoire autour du lac*. It tells about the worry of our ancestors to come and live in an anglophone province.

In closing, I wish to thank a wonderful lady from Saint-Pascal-Baylon, Madame Jeanine Pilon, who provided the information to allow me to present this statement today. Merci, chère Madame Pilon.

#### VAISAKHI

**Mrs. Linda Jeffrey:** It's a privilege to rise and recognize an important annual holiday coming up this weekend on Sunday, April 13. On Sunday, Sikh families in my community will be coming together to celebrate the 309th anniversary of Vaisakhi.

To celebrate this special time, families across Ontario will partake in celebrations organized by their local gurdwara. In my riding of Brampton–Springdale, the Sri Guru Nanak Sikh Centre has organized a community parade on Sunday, April 20.

Last year, more than 55,000 individuals attended the Vaisakhi parade. Today it is my pleasure to recognize the leadership of the gurdwara. These gentlemen work to ensure that seniors, youth and new immigrants feel connected to our community. I'm proud to have them as my guests in the east members' gallery.

This past summer, this group helped organize an Akhand Paath in the atrium of the new Brampton Civic Hospital prior to its opening. I learned that an Akhand Paath is three days of prayers which mark the beginning of something special in the community. Nearly 15,000 people attended this Akhand Paath and helped raise in excess of \$160,000 for the hospital.

On Sunday, I will attend ceremonies at my local gurdwara, and I encourage all members of this House to join me in celebrating this important religious day and the enormous contribution of Sikh individuals in building and strengthening communities across Ontario.

#### GO TRANSIT

**Mr. Bob Delaney:** Commuters on the Milton GO line's six eastbound and six westbound trains from Mississauga into Toronto each working day are getting a break.

Effective immediately, GO Transit is using its new, more powerful locomotives on the Milton line, adding two new cars to two eastbound trains and two westbound trains. Those two new 12-car trains eastbound in the morning depart from Lisgar at 6:56 and 7:46. Meadowvale commuters know them as the 7 o'clock and 7:50 trains, and at Streetsville, commuters know them as the 7:05 and 7:55 trains. Coming back to Mississauga, the new 12-car trains leave Union Station at 4:30 and 5:10. Soon, all trains on the Milton line will have 12 cars instead of the current 10.

Until a longer Streetsville platform is built, also later this year, all trains will only open certain doors at the Streetsville GO station. As well, at Meadowvale, when you're heading home, board the train at the very west end of the platform at Union Station, at the opposite end of the locomotive.

Ontario's infrastructure public transit investments are now getting western Mississauga residents to work and back home more effectively. We're not making public transit better with a tax cut; we are doing it with real investment from the Ontario taxpayer.

## WEARING OF SHAWL

**Mr. Randy Hillier:** On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: This afternoon, we are privileged to have hundreds of Tibetan Canadians at Queen's Park asking this government to represent them in their call for freedom and justice in Tibet. I have with me a traditional Tibetan scarf, called a kata, which is a Tibetan symbol of welcome and greetings and a show of respect for friends. I seek unanimous consent that I wear this kata and demonstrate my respect for those who seek to end oppression.

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** The member seeks unanimous consent to wear the symbolic cloth. Agreed? Agreed.

*Applause.*

*Interruption.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** We welcome all our guests here to Queen's Park, but just to remind everyone that they shouldn't be partaking in the applause. But you are more than welcome here today.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY  
AND RESPONSES

## STUDENT ASSISTANCE

**Hon. John Milloy:** I think everyone in the chamber knows that the key to Ontario's success in today's competitive global economy is our skilled and highly educated workforce. That's why our government is so committed to investing in the skills and knowledge of our people, so we can continue to attract the kind of jobs and investment to Ontario that will keep our province and our people moving forward.

We've been getting great results. Today, 100,000 more students are going on to college or university compared to five years ago. About 60% of Ontarians aged 25 to 64 have completed a post-secondary certificate, diploma or university degree program—a higher rate of post-secondary education than in any Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development country. And about 110,000 apprentices are learning a trade today, nearly 50,000 more than five years ago.

But we know there's more to do, especially for students who face extra challenges to getting a post-secondary education, such as those students who live in rural and remote areas of Ontario, far away from colleges and universities.

A Statistics Canada report found that students who live more than 80 kilometres away from a post-secondary institution are more than one third less likely to get a post-secondary education, and that this effect is strongest among low-income students. We want to help those students get where they need to go.

Today, in North Bay, the Premier announced that we will invest \$27 million over three years in new distance grants. These grants will help college and university students who must commute long distances every day, such

as the biotechnology student who lives in Horton and must commute to Carleton University in Ottawa.

It will help also post-secondary students who must move far away from home to go to school, such as the IT student from Blind River studying at Canadore College in North Bay who has to travel by bus to visit his family at home. These grants will be available to all qualifying students who are enrolled at an OSAP-approved college or university. We estimate that these grants will help over 24,000 students across the province.

We know that the road to higher education is tougher for these students. They're making personal sacrifices to build a bright future for themselves, and we owe it to them to do everything we can to help them succeed.

I'm proud of the work our government is doing to help young people in Ontario pursue higher education. About 120,000 students in Ontario receive grants from the province. Grants to students have increased almost threefold since 2004. As part of our \$1.5-billion skills-to-jobs action plan, we'll invest \$465 million to expand post-secondary student aid. And we'll invest \$970 million to build, expand and repair college and university facilities.

It's all part of our plan to move Ontario forward by ensuring that all young people in this province can reach their full potential. Together, we can build a brighter future for everyone.

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Responses? The member for Simcoe-Grey.

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## STUDENT ASSISTANCE

**Mr. Jim Wilson:** It's my duty to respond to the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities' statement today. I think you'll find that all members of this House would support initiatives to enhance post-secondary education for rural and northern students. As Minister of Northern Development and Mines, I distributed millions of dollars to help provide access to education for rural and northern students through organizations like Contact North, which is led by Mr. Maxim Jean-Louis and provides a unique network of access centres, audio-conference, videoconference and e-learning technologies for students and lifelong learners in remote and rural areas.

While programs like the one the minister has re-announced today may be good for a small handful of students, I ask the minister and the government: Why not lower tuition or ancillary fees by the \$27-million cost of this program so that every student will benefit?

I hope that today's reannouncement isn't just a diversion from some of the other issues the minister has failed to address in his portfolio. The minister fails to mention that Ontario's university students receive the lowest per capita funding of any province in this country, and the average student-faculty ratio in Ontario is the worst in the country. Both are dead last, 10 out of 10, behind all other provinces and territories. Being dead last



means students have larger class sizes than any other province in Canada, while faculty have less time to spend with students, leaving the quality of post-secondary education in Ontario threatened. In some universities, class sizes are so big that some classes have as many as 1,500 students, and students have to sit on the floor. The Ontario Confederation of University Faculty Associations reminded us this week that 5,500 new, full-time faculty are needed to be hired now just to keep up with increasing enrolments.

I reminded the House this week that in 1999 the Premier signed a pledge to bring per capita funding for universities up to the national average in his first mandate. The promise read as follows: "Ontario needs a strong, properly funded and affordable public university system to take us into the 21st century. I therefore promise to raise the operating grants per person for Ontario universities to the national average during my next term in government." Almost four and a half years after coming to office, Ontario still ranks, as I said, dead last in Canada in per capita funding.

You made a big deal in your budget about building more classrooms. What's the sense in having more classrooms if we don't have enough professors to fill them and give our students a proper-quality university education?

That's not all. Let's talk for a moment about jobs and training. We saw a media report last month that the city of Edmonton's campaign to lure Toronto university graduates to that Alberta city has been so successful that they plan to extend these job fairs to other Ontario universities.

We've also heard that British Columbia has spent \$400,000 in advertising campaigns at Union Station and the University of Toronto to lure workers out west. In fact, BC's economic development minister was standing in Union Station, handing out brochures and flowers to commuters.

It's nice that the minister wants to spend money on distance education, but what he's really doing is investing millions of dollars to educate our people, and now they're being poached from right under our noses because there's a brighter future for them outside Ontario. In fact, 72,000 people last year went to Alberta and Saskatchewan alone, and we can be certain that many more are leaving every month now.

To add insult to injury, BC believes they're doing your government a favour with these job fairs. Their economic development minister said that British Columbia is providing unemployed workers in Ontario with an option, rather than having them sit around, looking for work and driving up Ontario's cost of social services. How can this government be so incompetent and uncaring as to stand by and let this happen?

Let's not forget about apprentices. To become an electrician in Ontario, you have to complete a five-year apprenticeship period with a qualified electrician before you become eligible to practise your trade. To date, this minister and this government have steadfastly refused to

open up more apprentice positions. Ontario is one of the only jurisdictions in North America that requires up to as many as three qualified electricians just to train one apprentice. If the ratio were changed so that one electrician could supervise and train one apprentice, then thousands of new apprentice positions would open up in the province. No, this government won't change the apprentice-to-journeyman ratios; they're in the pockets of the unions, who don't want the changes.

You've lost over 20,000 manufacturing jobs, and yet you bragged in the budget that you are creating 20,000 new training spaces. They might have done better to invest the \$1.5 billion in lowering business taxes, like other provinces have done, and create jobs, quality of life and opportunity for employment for everyone, rather than just 20,000 of the 200,000 people who have lost their manufacturing jobs over the last two years.

Today's announcement is a reannouncement from the budget. I think they should have spent the money on lowering tuition and ancillary fees. I say to him on the training side: When did Big Brother government become the trainer for jobs in Ontario? You seem to have given up on traditional on-the-job training. Progressive Conservatives believe in creating jobs, training people on the job and helping them in that environment.

#### STUDENT ASSISTANCE

**Mr. Rosario Marchese:** I want to put the minister's announcement in some perspective, if I can. We were number 10 in per capita funding under the Conservatives. We are still number 10 in per capita funding. Nothing has changed.

The government is so proud to say they put in \$6 billion. As they make that announcement, they clap because they're number 10 in per capita funding. How could it be that they could be so proud to be at the bottom of all other provinces in Canada? They smile and they clap and they're proud of the fact that they're at the bottom of that list. Good for you, Liberals. You have—we have—the biggest classes in all of Canada in terms of how many students end up in large, large rooms that can't accommodate those students; the largest class sizes. We are proud and we clap.

We have the highest ratio in the country between teachers and students. It's a 25-to-one ratio, and in most other provinces the ratio between students and teachers is 19 to one or 20 to one. You clap, saying, "Yeah, this is really great."

We are deferring our maintenance capital programs because we don't have the money, yet you clap because you've put in \$6 billion. We have the highest debt ratio, literally, in the whole of the country. Kids, young people, have the highest debt that they have carried, and they're carrying it over their shoulders, and you say, "That's okay, because thousands more students keep coming. If they have the biggest debt burden in the history of this province, that's okay because we keep on receiving more and more students to our university and college sector."



I'm telling you, our colleges and universities are tired of not getting the kinds of support they need from this government. We want—they want—full-time professors, yet at the college level, half of the professors are part-time; at the university level, half of them are part-time. Why? Because universities and colleges don't get enough money from you to be able to hire full-time professors so that the students can get the quality of attention they need. So we've got part-time professors doing a full-time load here and there. Students can't get that support that they desperately need. The Liberals are saying, "This is really great. We're doing fine."

You're not doing fine. You are not doing so well. You should not be so proud of yourselves. I give you credit: You've introduced a grant system, and that's good. That's good, but 90% of the middle-class students have no access to that grant; only 10% do, and it varies—it could be 200, 500, 1,000—and you might say, "Better than a kick in the teeth." You're quite right, but 90% have no access to that grant. Many of those kids end up having to go to the bank and get a loan, and when they pay that loan, they have to start paying interest right away. It's not when they graduate; it's as soon as they get that loan from the bank that they have to start paying. So students are coming out of university with an average of \$25,000 of debt. That's a lot. That's a big, big debt they're carrying on their shoulders.

Should you be that proud of your record? I'm saying no. I'm saying we should do more. I'm saying the students are paying more and more for their education than ever. In 1993, students were paying 23% of their own education. Today it's 45%, and it's increasing, and Liberals say, "It's okay." I argue that it's not okay—it's not.

We have a governmental obligation to support our students. We have an obligation to reduce their debt load and not to have them worry about how they're going to have to pay for their loans on a regular and everyday basis if they have to go to the bank to get that loan because they're not eligible for a loan from the government.

In the context of all this, the Premier announced they will invest \$27 million over three years in new distance grants—thanks very much.

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### VISITORS

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** We have a number of guests who are joining us today on behalf of the member from Kitchener Centre. We'd like to welcome Chris Locke, executive director of the Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance; other members of the student alliance; and a special guest, James Alexander, from the National Union of Students Scotland.

On behalf of the member from Brampton–Springdale, we'd like to welcome the governing committee of the Sri Guru Nanak Sikh Centre of Brampton, seated in the members' gallery east. Welcome, gentlemen.

On behalf of the member from Mississauga South, we'd like to welcome Anita Sebastian and Poulouse Sebastian, the mother and father of page Paul Sebastian. Welcome.

On behalf of the member from Oak Ridges–Markham, we'd like to welcome Dr. Alex Hukowich and Mrs. Lynne Hukowich, seated in the west members' gallery. Dr. Hukowich is a director of the Central East local health integration network.

On behalf of the Minister of Health and the member from Whitby–Oshawa, we'd like to welcome, seated in the west gallery, representatives from Parkinson Society Canada: Joyce Gordon, Shannon MacDonald, Harry Murphy, Charles Keary and Jean Keary. Welcome today.

On behalf of the member from Whitby–Oshawa, I'd like to welcome Mr. Kerry Flynn, a constituent and a student, in the west members' gallery.

On behalf of the member from Welland and the member from St. Catharines, I'd like to welcome students from Sir Winston Churchill Secondary School in St. Catharines.

In the west gallery, we would like to welcome students from Cardinal McGuigan secondary school in Downsview, in the riding of York West. Welcome today.

On behalf of the member from Parkdale–High Park, we'd like to welcome a number of guests in the west members' gallery: Sonam Durjee, Kalsang Tsomo, Nawang Diki, Kunga Chodak, Kidup Gyatso, Lobsang Yeshe, Tendon Dongtotsang, Sonam Dolma, Thuptan Nangyal, Chodon Chodon, Urgen Sangay, Sonam Tsering and Tenzing Jigme.

Welcome to our guests today.

### TIBET

**Hon. George Smitherman:** On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: On behalf of the Premier, I seek unanimous consent to move the following motion without notice and put to an immediate vote, without debate: that the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, as a long-standing friend of China, express concern with the current situation in Tibet and encourage the parties to engage in meaningful dialogue.

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** The Minister of Health has asked for consent to move the motion. Agreed?

**Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer:** On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I would move that this motion be passed after we have had 10 minutes of discussion per party.

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Just to clarify, is the member asking for unanimous consent for 10 minutes of debate from each party?

**Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer:** I am.

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** The member seeks unanimous consent for 10 minutes of debate on the motion. Agreed? Agreed. Minister of Health.

**Hon. George Smitherman:** On behalf of the—  
*Interjection.*



**Hon. George Smitherman:** I'm sorry. Oh, read the motion again, sir?

That the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, as a long-standing friend of China, express concern with the current situation in Tibet and encourage the parties to engage in meaningful dialogue.

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Debate? The Minister of Health.

**Mr. Peter Kormos:** What about Tiananmen Square?

**Hon. George Smitherman:** I think we know who will be speaking opposite on the resolution. We certainly look forward to that, and we look forward to the opportunity that all parties will have today to express their views on this issue, which I think has captured a very significant degree of attention from all members. It's unfortunate that members would choose to heckle other members on a motion when we're seeking, as a Legislature, to present a unified face and view on behalf of the people of Ontario. Indeed, in our own individual ways, in our ridings and in our engagements with our constituents, we're all given the opportunity to learn of and to express our views on this matter.

Of course, here in Ontario we are a jurisdiction that has a long-standing commitment to human rights, and we have always been a jurisdiction abiding by the constitutional responsibility of the government of Canada to set in motion the appropriate Foreign Affairs mechanisms. Nevertheless, it is the long-standing tradition of the province of Ontario that we are a jurisdiction that enjoys a good degree of human rights and sees as necessary the expansion of these rights across the land.

In keeping with this, the motion that is before us raises very appropriately the context of the debate that's going on with respect to China and its relationship with the people in Tibet. We acknowledge, of course, as a provincial jurisdiction the limitations, appropriately so, but at the same time express our views with respect to ensuring that there is an opportunity, as is at the heart of what goes on in this place, for constructive dialogue among parties. The resolution calls for that. It encourages the parties to engage in a meaningful dialogue that can heighten the debate to a higher level than perhaps we've been experiencing through whatever we can learn from the media's characterizations of the way this issue is going.

We think this resolution that is before the House today stands as a very strong opportunity for Ontarians to be united around a resolution that has the force and effect of all members of the Legislature of Ontario. On that note, we'd encourage all members of the Legislature to support this motion.

**Mr. Randy Hillier:** It's interesting to see that this motion is being brought to the floor today, after the secrecy and the deception of these junkets in the past.

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Please, I'd just ask the member to use language that's parliamentary. I would ask that he withdraw the comment.

**Mr. Randy Hillier:** I withdraw.

To pass a motion and to call it a strong motion—this is a weak, fluffy motion of no importance whatsoever. To

ask that constructive dialogue to be engaged in by the Communist Chinese party with the people in Tibet as they bring tanks in, as they use batons and beat people—and this government asks for them to engage in constructive dialogue.

You cannot have constructive dialogue when one side is so overwhelmingly powerful and the other side so overwhelmingly weak; when one side is willing to use force, when one side is willing to use violence and has no regard and no respect for freedoms, for justice, for any of our democratic values.

There is an opportunity for all western countries, all western democracies—provincial or federal—to demand that Tibet and Tibetans be treated with respect and that their human rights not be just a privilege granted by the Communist Chinese party.

For 50 years the world has sat back and watched oppression in Tibet and has done nothing. Our western civilization has spoken out in the past against other countries that did not respect human rights. We spoke out against South Africa and against Rhodesia. We have spoken out against many oppressive regimes in the past, and we took action. Those actions turned into results and helped those people in those countries. We must take action now, for when those Olympics are over, China is not going to treat Tibetans any better than they're treating them today. You can be absolutely sure, after the Olympics, that the Chinese army and security forces will take on Tibet with far more vigour than what we're seeing now.

The world spotlight is shining on the corruption and the violence of Tibet. We must shine the light brighter. We must not allow this oppression to continue. I ask this House to take further steps, to have the courage and not be fearful of China as a trading partner. Do not be fearful of China. Be a strong advocate for human rights and freedoms everywhere, for if we do not stand up and defend human rights in the free western world, then who will?

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**Mr. Robert W. Runciman:** I think it's fair to put on the record a bit about the process here today to deal with this very significant issue. For the people who are unaware, and perhaps they're viewing this, there was a House leaders' meeting that occurred earlier today. This issue was not brought forward for discussion by all three House leaders so that we could work out an agreement in terms of an appropriate way to deal with this very significant issue. Instead, the two opposition parties—again showing disdain for people who are not on the government benches—were approached at the last minute, I gather in response to the demonstration that occurred on the steps of the Legislature earlier today by people genuinely concerned about the oppression in Tibet. We have this surface concern with this tabled resolution today.

It's an offence, really, to all members of this assembly, but certainly an insult to the people who genuinely care about what's happening in Tibet today. If this govern-



ment was sincere and genuine about their concerns, the Minister of Economic Development would not be traveling to China. She and her Premier would not be washing their hands in terms of responsibility for raising these kinds of human rights abuses with the responsible authorities in the government of China. Actually, I think to really send a message of contempt for the actions of the Chinese government in Tibet, the minister would stand up today and say she is cancelling her trip.

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Once again, I just remind our guests who are visiting that the floor can participate in clapping etc., but our guests should not. Thank you.

**Ms. Cheri DiNovo:** It's a great privilege to rise in this House on behalf of the Tibetan people, both in Toronto and Ontario, and around the world, along with world leaders everywhere who are speaking with one voice against the abuses that the Chinese government has visited upon the Tibetan people at home and against the silence of the members opposite that meets those abuses.

I want to share a couple of quotes here. One is: "Individuals have international duties which transcend the national"—or provincial—"obligations of obedience. Therefore, citizens have the duty to prevent crimes against peace and humanity from occurring." That's from the Nuremberg war crimes tribunal.

Another one that seems appropriate is: "The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good people to do nothing." That, we all know.

Earlier this week, to set up this discussion, we discovered—and we discovered it by rumour, not because we were told in the opposition, not because there was an announcement made, not because there was a press release, but by rumour and innuendo—that there might be a trip that the Minister of Economic Development and Trade was making to China. We asked her office if this was true. We got no response. Instead, we had to ask in the House. Then, and only then, did we get a response.

Other trips this minister has made were made with great fanfare and pomp. I remember the trip to India; I remember the trip to Tokyo. Certainly, the world knew about those trips. But clearly this government didn't want the world to know about this trip. Why, one might ask, didn't they want the world to know about this trip? Because it's a shameful trip.

I want to make very clear that we, in the New Democratic Party, are not against trade with China. We have nothing against the Chinese people, and neither do the Tibetans in our midst. We have nothing against the Chinese people and nothing against trade with China. We do, however, have something very profoundly against the timing of this trip. While innocent Tibetans are being incarcerated, while innocent Tibetans are being murdered, we do have something against the timing of this trip. And we certainly have something against the fact that this Minister of Economic Development and Trade will not commit—will not promise—to speak about human rights violations in Tibet. She will not promise to speak about human rights violations.

It's very nice that the government brought this motion forward; we are certainly going to support it. But we want more than just words on a page; we want action. Here is what His Holiness the Dalai Lama is asking for. He is asking (1) that the government of China sit down with His Holiness the Dalai Lama and negotiate; (2) that the arbitrary arrests, incarcerations and murders in Tibet stop immediately; and (3) simply to open the border of Tibet so that world journalists, so that our own Queen's Park press, so that press everywhere can go in and find out what's really going on in Tibet with the Tibetan people.

Again, did you hear anything in what I said that called for a boycott? No. Did you hear anything in what I said that was against any of our athletes? No. Did you hear anything in what I said that was against trade? No. Did you hear anything in what I said that was against the Chinese people? No. What I'm talking about is simple human dignity, simple human rights—simply the ethical, moral, right thing to do.

So we don't ask about this; we demand this. In fact, we demand it with one voice around the world. We demand that the flame of shame that is passing from country to country be accompanied with a protest—an ethical, moral protest—that says, "Stop the killings in Tibet. Stand up for human rights." All leaders, stand up for human rights," and for this particular trade mission with Ms. Papatello, the Minister of Economic Development and Trade, that when she is there, she promise—she promise—to talk about human rights in Tibet.

**Mr. Howard Hampton:** I simply want to lend some context to this motion. All week we have been asking the McGuinty government to stand up and speak out in favour of human rights. On Monday, when telephone calls went into the Premier's office and into the office of the Minister of Economic Development and Trade, asking if there was a planned trip by the minister to Beijing, the response from both the Premier's office and the minister's office was, "We don't know any details about any trip." It was an attempt by the McGuinty government to try to hide what they were doing. When a Globe and Mail reporter called the Premier's office and asked the same question, they received a reply from the spokesperson in the Premier's office saying, "We don't know the details of any trip."

Anybody in this Legislature knows that when a cabinet minister or the Premier goes to Washington or to India or to Japan, an announcement is made about the trip, what it's for and what it is to accomplish. There's a virtual media parade attached before, during and after. But in this case, at a time when it's important for people around the world to speak out for human rights, the McGuinty government was trying to run below the radar screen and say nothing.

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All week, we have asked this government to take a stand in favour of human rights. I say that we've been met with some of the most wishy-washy answers, some terrible answers—the McGuinty government trying to



say that they have no responsibility for human rights, that it rests solely with the federal government, when I know that this Minister of Economic Development and Trade would probably not answer her phone if the Prime Minister called her on some occasions. We have been met with some of the most terrible responses.

Yet today, at the very last minute, we're presented with a motion. I want people to be clear: This is still not a government position. This motion is not a government position. The Legislature passes resolutions all the time and the government disregards them. This is not a government position. This is not the McGuinty government coming forward and saying, "We stand for human rights. We believe there is something terribly wrong in what is happening in Tibet. We ask the government of China to address these issues." This is not a government position. This is a motion of the Legislature which, like so many other motions of this Legislature, the McGuinty government has ignored. That is the truth. That is the reality. So I am sure the McGuinty government cabinet ministers will walk from this chamber and pat themselves on the back and say, "Well, wasn't that a neat little manoeuvre?"

Here is the truth: The McGuinty government still has not taken a position in favour of human rights. The McGuinty government is still trying to weave and duck and dodge.

I simply point out the contrast again. Not that many years ago, the world was faced with the disgrace of apartheid in South Africa. You did not see state governments or provincial governments or municipal governments or federal governments ducking and weaving and dodging. People came forward and they spoke with one voice. They said, "What is happening in South Africa is wrong, and the world must do all that we can to change this." You know what? Change happened. Human rights were upheld. An incredible change happened.

But here, all week, what we have seen from the McGuinty government is a continuing effort to duck and dodge and weave and avoid taking a position. That continues today with this motion, because this is not a statement by the McGuinty government; this is simply a resolution by the Legislature which we know the McGuinty government is going to ignore, as they have ignored so many resolutions by this Legislature.

We will vote for the resolution, but I still want to hear from the McGuinty government that it stands for human rights in Tibet and that it's going to speak out for human rights in Tibet.

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Order. Minister of Transport. Order, please.

Mr. Smitherman has moved that the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, as a long-standing friend of China, express concern with the current situation in Tibet and encourage the parties to engage in meaningful dialogue. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

*Agreed to.*

## VISITORS

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Let's take this opportunity: We have with us today in the Speaker's gallery a delegation from the internal affairs committee of Baden-Württemberg, Germany. With the delegation are the Honourable Heribert Rech, Minister of the Interior, and Mr. Hans Georg Junginger, committee chairman. Please join me in warmly welcoming our guests from Germany today.

## ORAL QUESTIONS

### INTERNATIONAL TRADE

**Mr. Robert W. Runciman:** My question is to the Minister of Economic Development and Trade, and it's regarding her disturbing decision to travel to China, we have to assume, later this week, since she's keeping her itinerary secret. Earlier today we had a demonstration at the Legislature highlighting concerns about the ongoing violent oppression of Tibetans by Chinese authorities. Yesterday, the United Steelworkers issued a release stating that unless or until the jobs crisis in the province is properly addressed, the minister shouldn't set foot in China. Those are two very valid reasons to cancel your ill-thought-out trip. Will you do that?

**Hon. Sandra Pupatello:** I do appreciate this question. It gives us an opportunity to speak to people who are working in this province and in particular in the manufacturing sector, which is facing more challenge, perhaps, than it has ever had. This is the very reason that our government has taken on a very aggressive approach around the world to address these issues of globalization.

Ontario needs to be in the world, and what that means for Ontario manufacturers and those who work in the field of manufacturing—we look for every opportunity to sell Ontario products around the world, because they are great products. We look for every opportunity to give our companies access to markets, and we believe that Ontario can do this and can do this in more ways than one, with the addition of 10 international marketing centres around the world. In particular, this former minister in this very portfolio engaged in the very same activity—

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Thank you. Supplementary.

**Mr. Robert W. Runciman:** What a crock.

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** I'd ask the member to withdraw that comment, please.

**Mr. Robert W. Runciman:** I withdraw.

The Oxford Dictionary defines "boondoggle" as "a trivial or useless undertaking." We know that's the case here, despite the minister's empty rhetoric. What the Minister of Economic Development is engaging in is much more than a taxpayer-funded boondoggle; it's also an in-your-face insult to the Tibetan people and the hundreds of thousands of Ontarians who have lost their jobs under your watch.



Minister, once again, will you do the right thing and cancel your trip?

**Hon. Sandra Pupatello:** I do know that my Premier was very clear yesterday when he quoted a former Minister of Economic Development and Trade saying that Ontario businesses have great stories to tell, good products to sell, both nationally and internationally, excellent opportunities to present them to the world—Bob Runciman, Minister of Economic Development and Trade. In fact, this same party while in government opened their last office and perhaps their only office—and where did they open that office? In none other than Shanghai, China.

Let's be clear. We can have the politics that you choose to engage in today or we can talk about the realities of the job market for the people of Ontario. What is very clear, whether talking about the steelworkers who work in our steel sector or the automotive workers who work in our automotive plants, or any of our manufacturing plants—

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Thank you. Final supplementary.

**Mr. Robert W. Runciman:** I suspect in her heart of hearts the minister knows what she's doing is indefensible and offensive. That has to be the reason she attempted to hide the trip from the public. She claims that's not the case and her colleague claims that's not the case, but when her predecessor went to China three years ago, the trip was announced over four months in advance, with no less than 10 news releases prior to departure. This minister had no formal announcement, no press release. She knew this trip was wrong and compounded her failure in judgment by trying to hide it from the public.

Minister, with Tibetans being killed, our manufacturing sector in crisis, will you cancel this unsavoury excursion?

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**Hon. Sandra Pupatello:** I do wish that the opposition paid more attention to the tremendous work that goes on in the Ministry of Economic Development and Trade. Perhaps you should join me when I'm speaking to the chambers of commerce right across this province, identifying exactly where we're going, exactly where we're opening offices. I wish that this particular member were more interested so he could see how much greater the job is since he was in this very same chair.

The reality is, Bombardier in Thunder Bay wants those jobs that produce rail line—for where?—for China. Bombardier in Kingston provides those jobs for Ontarians to develop products for China. These are Ontario jobs that depend on our ability to be in the world, and we appreciate, and such is the language in today's resolution, that we cannot divorce ourselves from the politics in China. We will stand, as we do, with our federal counterparts, whose responsibility it is to do the right thing and—

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Thank you, Minister. New question.

## MANUFACTURING JOBS

**Mr. Tim Hudak:** A question to the Deputy Premier. While the economic development and trade minister is off on a junket to China, Dalton McGuinty's tax-and-spend policies have chased almost 200,000 well-paying manufacturing jobs from Ontario. The London area has been particularly hard hit, with some 4,600 well-paying manufacturing jobs lost in this past year alone.

Deputy Premier, is the loss of manufacturing jobs in London now in excess of the job loss record of your federal colleague and good friend Bob Rae when he was Premier?

**Hon. George Smitherman:** I want to thank the honourable member for his question. We've had the chance on quite a few occasions now over the past several weeks to debate the contrasting strategies. Their strategy is incoherent insofar as, on the one hand, it calls for \$5 billion in revenue reductions, and on the other hand, or in the other voice, it very regularly calls for substantial investment in spending programs. We know where that leads us. We inherited from them a \$5.6-billion deficit, and we don't think that the people of Ontario want us to go back.

Our recent budget really does strike out in favour of the people of Ontario by dramatically enhancing their capacity to have the training, skills and education that they need to be a success in the economy which is emerging, and substantial investments in infrastructure, while at the same time making targeted investments in tax reduction. These are three of five points of a very balanced plan, and I think it stands in very sharp and positive contrast to the incoherence of the opposition party.

**Mr. Tim Hudak:** The Deputy Premier is right. His budget has struck out when it comes to saving jobs in London and southwestern Ontario. If there's anything coherent about your economic strategy, it's that it has been a tremendous success in chasing well-paying manufacturing jobs out of Ontario.

Just today, we learned that 150 people at the CanGro facility in Exeter will lose their jobs when that plant closes at the end of this month. That's in tandem with the 150 CanGro jobs lost in Niagara around the same time. Deputy Premier, are these latest closures evidence that we should steel ourselves in southwestern Ontario for even more manufacturing job losses in the months ahead?

**Hon. George Smitherman:** I think it's very, very clear that there are parts of the economy that are not functioning as well as others, and that in an environment which the Premier has spoken of very often, where the dollar is at such a high level, where gasoline prices are putting so much pressure, and where our biggest trading partner, the United States, is obviously experiencing some substantial softness in its economy, the implications for Ontario are very challenging. That's why we think it's important in those times—unlike them, where they would throw people overboard and dramatically cut programs—to reach out and support our Ontarians, to



believe in them and to unlock in them all of the capacity they have to be strong and competitive in the environment that is emerging.

Our five-point action plan reduces business taxes—

*Interjection.*

**Hon. George Smitherman:** Well, if the honourable member wants to ask me a question, he should have one.

We've invested in infrastructure. We're supporting innovation. We're partnering in business. Most especially, we're investing in our people. We know that the people of Ontario are fantastic. They are strong and they are resilient, and together, we'll lead forward to an even stronger Ontario.

**Mr. Tim Hudak:** I say to the Deputy Premier, the only rolls that seem to be growing are those making more than \$100,000 per year, including 92 more \$100,000 positions at the Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corp., including 20 vice-president positions.

Meanwhile, Siemens in Chatham, after 62 years in business, will close their doors this June, throwing 70 people out of work in the Chatham area. The Keiper plant in London, a seat manufacturer, last month announced a further 100 job losses.

I ask you, Deputy Premier, to tell the people of London and southwestern Ontario: How much longer do you intend to keep Ontario's tax rates among the highest in North America, and how many more factories are going to close?

**Hon. George Smitherman:** The honourable member wants to talk about the \$100,000 club, but in the very midst of the party that you're a front-bencher for, the chief of staff in these tough times got a 51% increase.

The biggest increase that I am aware of by any group on the sunshine list is the 124% increase in the number of nurses who were on it, reflecting a very strong commitment on the part of our government to public services.

The honourable member doesn't like the fact—you can see that he gets a little stirred up when it happens, but interestingly, this party voted against the budget, a budget that had in it initiatives that support new investment in the province of Ontario. We lured a new plant to Tilbury with new jobs for the people there, but we did it over the howling cries of the opposition, whose strategy is the same as it is was when Mike Harris ruled the roost here: cut Ontario's capacity to invest in the services that people need, and reduce taxes even if it means running a deficit and borrowing the money.

## INTERNATIONAL TRADE

**Mr. Howard Hampton:** My question is for the Deputy Premier. At a time when Tibetan people are dying and are being incarcerated in large numbers at the hands of the current government of China, at a time when there is a mass denial of human rights in Tibet, does the McGuinty government believe it is appropriate to send a cabinet minister to China on official government business?

**Hon. George Smitherman:** To the Minister of Economic Development and Trade.

**Hon. Sandra Pupatello:** I'm very pleased to be able to address this issue. For some time now, and for those who would have liked to watch our ministry activity, they would know that for some time we have been planning this trip and encouraging people to talk to us about the benefits of our engagement with China. That has always been the case. We've known about this since last fall.

No, none of the members of the opposition have bothered to ask those questions or attend events where we've made that very public. In fact, historically, when we have had a trade mission that included companies that we were bringing with us—yes, we've had events where we've launched those companies coming with us, and that has become very apparent to the opposition. But they certainly didn't follow my activity this past January on a trip to India, or to Germany, and likewise, until this week, did not follow my activity to China either.

Unfortunately, I can't agree with the very premise that they are putting forward. I'm happy to answer questions again on this.

**Mr. Howard Hampton:** The question was, does the McGuinty government believe it is appropriate to be sending a cabinet minister to China at this time, when we see people being killed, people being incarcerated and a mass denial of human rights in Tibet? I didn't hear an answer, but I take it from the non-answer that the McGuinty government does believe that it is appropriate.

If you believe it's appropriate, can you tell us why, when a Globe and Mail reporter called the Premier's office earlier this week and asked, "Is there is a trip planned by the Minister of Economic Development and Trade?", the response received was, "We don't know any details about a trip"? Can you tell us why that was the response, if this indeed has been in the planning by the government for some time?

**Hon. Sandra Pupatello:** I do find it difficult that you would find a board of trade for the city of Toronto a secret location, or in fact a chamber of commerce—those I've been travelling to—that you would call those locations a secret. In fact, for the speech last week at the board of trade here in Toronto, the CP wire story indicated a number of items that we had talked about in that very speech. So there was, indeed, media at these events, but the members opposite didn't care to worry about the aggressive behaviour of the economic development ministry at this time that we need it the most.

The reality is that we are engaged in constructive engagement, and we're going to continue to do that. We have followed the lead of the federal government in this area. We know that that is the right approach to China. We know that it affords us the opportunity to sit down in both a private fashion and a public fashion to have these kinds of conversations that often go beyond business discussions. We've already known that would be the case at this time.

1440

**Mr. Howard Hampton:** Once again, the question was relatively straightforward: why the Premier's office



would even deny any knowledge of this planned trip by the Minister of Economic Development and Trade to China when the minister wants us to believe that it was well known, that it had been well known for some time.

Minister, can you tell me this: Can you tell me why, then, a government member would put forward a motion today that wants to try to address some of the human rights issues, why a government member would put it forward today, when the McGuinty government has taken no position on this, when the McGuinty government has failed to speak out, when the McGuinty government has failed to state any position on this? Can you tell us why a motion would happen in the Legislature when it's so apparent that the McGuinty government's position is not that position?

**Hon. Sandra Pupatello:** When I stand in this House to vote on any number of issues, I mean it when I stand to vote in favour of a motion. What I'm going to take from this last question is that this very member opposite actually doesn't believe, when he stands on his feet and votes in favour of the motion—which you just did in this House. We take that very seriously.

The reality is that for us and the work we do in this ministry, we are looking at what Ontario faces in challenges around the world today—definitely challenges in manufacturing.

This is the same member who's travelled to Thunder Bay and with such doublespeak speaks at one time to workers, good CAW membership, about what he wants to do for those workers and comes to Toronto and speaks a completely different language about what he wants to say.

We are talking about jobs here. We're talking about Bombardier in Thunder Bay and Bombardier in Kingston, people whose livelihood depends on the kinds of trade they can engage in—where? In China. We are in constructive engagements, and we will continue to be.

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** I would ask both sides—there are comments that are made either directly or indirectly in the heckling—that we have some respect for one another. Please, let's watch the parliamentary language.

New question.

**Mr. Howard Hampton:** Again, back to the Deputy Premier: I would say that the only people who want to have two positions on this are the people opposite. The McGuinty government doesn't want to take a position, but they want to present a motion in the Legislature that would make it look as if they've taken a position.

## ABORIGINAL RIGHTS

**Mr. Howard Hampton:** My question for the Deputy Premier is this: Last night in your constituency, 500 people came together to protest the actions of the McGuinty government. Some of these 500 people were environmentalists, some represented human rights organizations and some of them aboriginal chiefs. All stated their oppo-

sition to the jailing of First Nation leaders from Kitchenuhmaykoosib Inninuwug First Nation and from Ardoch First Nation, and they spoke with one voice. They want to see the immediate release of those First Nations leaders. Is the McGuinty government prepared to commit today to supporting the immediate and unconditional release of those jailed First Nations leaders?

**Hon. George Smitherman:** To the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs.

**Hon. Michael Bryant:** I've said it before and I'll say it again: The crown opposed incarceration at the time in which the court heard submissions on whether or not Chief Donny Morris and council ought to be incarcerated as a sentence that was part of a contempt motion. I've said before, and the Attorney General has made it very clear, that supporting the appeal is entirely consistent with that position. That's why we are certainly hoping that all the necessary materials will be filed by the party that needs to file them in order to bring this appeal forward so that the Attorney General can file the materials to indicate, in fact, that we support the appeal. So the answer is, I say yet again: Yes, we support the appeal, and no, we never supported incarceration.

**Mr. Howard Hampton:** One of the other positions that was raised by the national chief, Phil Fontaine, the former national chief, Ovide Mercredi, and many of the environmental and social justice organizations is that the Mining Act in Ontario must be rewritten to bring it into accord with the constitutional decisions of the Supreme Court of Canada that no mining opportunities, no mineral exploration opportunities, should be granted unless and until the government of Ontario has consulted and accommodated those First Nation rights and interests that may be at stake.

Is the McGuinty government prepared to do the right thing and amend the Mining Act so that more First Nation leaders are not jailed as a result of your wrong-headed legislation?

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** I just ask the member: Can you please relate how that supplementary relates to your initial question?

**Mr. Howard Hampton:** It's about the jailing of First Nation leaders. Those First Nation leaders were jailed as a result of a mining permit—

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Minister of Aboriginal Affairs.

**Hon. Michael Bryant:** As the member knows, the government has already committed to amending the Mining Act—a Mining Act, by the way, that has been in place for decades and decades, and a Mining Act that the member, when he was Attorney General, had an opportunity to amend, but he didn't. And the government has indicated, obviously, that we as a government will collaborate fully, in terms of consultation and drafting, when it comes to ensuring that we do make changes to the Mining Act.

I remind the member as well that in a number of regions of the province, First Nations have in fact entered



into agreements with mining companies which involved significant consultation, and agreements and memorandums of understanding that in some cases received the support of 85% of the community in ratification votes. I wouldn't want the member to pretend. In fact, First Nations are entering into agreements for the benefit of their community in order to create jobs and prosperity in those communities.

**Mr. Howard Hampton:** The question is this: A mining permit was granted and mining rights were granted to this company, Platinex, by the McGuinty government. There was no consultation and accommodation of the First Nation before those mining opportunities were granted. That is what resulted, ultimately, in the jailing of the First Nation leadership, because they expressed opposition to this, as I think many other people are. The question is not about what this or that particular First Nation may want to do under particular circumstances; it is about bringing the Mining Act and mining legislation and mining regulations into accord with the most recent decisions of the Supreme Court of Canada.

So I'm left to ask: When is the McGuinty government going to amend the Mining Act and the regulations thereunder so that no longer will we see First Nations leaders being jailed because they express opposition to these things?

**Hon. Michael Bryant:** Again, I remind the member that he had an opportunity for five years to amend it and he didn't do it. I should also say, with respect to national Chief Phil Fontaine, who is obviously showing extraordinary leadership on this issue and many issues, that he said he was in fact encouraged by his meeting with the government of Ontario in terms of our solidarity around the fact that, contrary to what the member suggests, the jailing of the First Nation chief and council was not something that ought to have happened. I say to the member that, of course, we need to amend the Mining Act. But surely the member doesn't want this government to unilaterally slam down a Mining Act that hasn't been the result of significant collaboration and consultation with First Nations.

You can't have it both ways, I say to the member. We're going to consult with First Nations, we're going to make sure that a bill is tabled before this House that amends the Mining Act, and we'll do something that that government—

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** New question.

## COMMITTEE BUSINESS

**Mrs. Joyce Savoline:** To the government House leader, Minister Bryant: This morning, the committee on finance and economic affairs was called to discuss my private member's Bill 42. This government, with eyes downcast, refused to make a simple democratic decision.

A pattern is emerging in the careless way in which this government is playing with our democratic system. There is absolutely no harm in allowing the citizens of Ontario to participate in the democratic process, as our fore-

fathers intended. In fact, public participation is the cornerstone of the democratic ideals we hold dear.

Minister, why have you directed your government to deny the citizens of Ontario a voice in our legislative process?

1450

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Stop the clock for a moment, please.

In consultation with the Clerk's table, you cannot direct a question to the government House leader. You have to direct your question to the ministry that the bill would pertain to. So do you have a minister that you would be directing that question to?

Start the clock, please.

**Mrs. Joyce Savoline:** As the Minister of Finance isn't here, I'll direct it to the Minister of Labour.

**Hon. Brad Duguid:** I'll refer that to the House leader.

**Hon. Michael Bryant:** We arranged this in a parliamentary fashion, Speaker. I would have taken the question directly.

Firstly, the budget bill is going to that committee, and the member will know that the supply and estimates process of this Legislature is an historic process that has been followed by government after government after government.

It's absolutely critical, obviously, that the many important services that are provided by the government of Ontario are in fact funded through the general revenue fund, and that has to happen by a budget bill. The budget bill is before committee. It needs to go before that committee, and I'm sure all members look forward to debating the matter and the committee ultimately deciding how the budget bill ought to fare under committee hearings.

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Thank you. Supplementary?

**Mrs. Joyce Savoline:** Welcome to my world, Mr. Speaker.

To whichever minister wants to answer, the intent of my private member's bill was to close a loophole in your own legislation. The minister just said that the committee can decide on its own business. This committee has no business in front of it right now. The reason that this government gave for shutting down the bill is that the House leaders should decide when the bill should proceed.

I understand that both the NDP and the PC House leaders were in agreement about sending this bill forward. The reality is that this government, not the opposition, is opposed to the citizens of Ontario participating in a democratic process. Why is this government afraid to accept the work with the legislation that did not originate in the back room of the Liberal Party?

**Hon. Michael Bryant:** I'm tempted to refer this one to the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs, but I won't.

**Hon. James J. Bradley:** Refer it to John Tory. He wants her seat.

**Hon. Michael Bryant:** I can't refer it to John Tory.

The budget bill has \$190 million in rebates for manufacturers, and we need that bill passed.



But it has to be said: That this, the party of the Magna budget, this, the party of the omnibus bills, this, the party of multiple breaking-of-the-record closure motions, would be lecturing any party or any government about the subject of democracy and following parliamentary procedure—I do believe there were a number of contempt findings by the Speaker of the day with respect to the treatment of democracy in this House by the Conservative Party.

At the end of the day, I just wish the member would let the committee decide how it's going to conduct its business.

### INTERNATIONAL TRADE

**Ms. Cheri DiNovo:** My question, in the absence of the Premier, is to the Deputy Premier.

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** I would remind the member not to make comments about members being present or not.

**Ms. Cheri DiNovo:** To the Deputy Premier: Since the Premier insists on sending the minister of trade to China on this trip—this junket, as the Tory caucus calls it—will you promise to instruct her to speak in her official capacity on Tibetan human rights? Will you actually put some substance into the resolution we all just passed?

**Hon. George Smitherman:** Firstly, I do think it is disappointing that the leader of the third party has put his own lack of sincerity around the votes that he makes on the floor in questioning the sincerity of members on the motion.

I think that on the matter at hand, if the member who asked me the question were to just take a look at Hansard from yesterday, or perhaps it was the day before, the Premier made it very clear that in these trips, of course, come up private occasions where there will be an opportunity for such discussions.

Any of us who have been around for even a day or two have an understanding of the values and the capacities of the Minister of Economic Development and Trade on this issue, and, therefore, I think Ontarians should have strong confidence on that point.

**Ms. Cheri DiNovo:** You know, it's amazing that there are 300 Tibetans outside and not one Liberal.

*Interjections.*

**Ms. Cheri DiNovo:** I ask the question again, because I did not hear an answer: Will this government commit their minister of trade and development to speaking about Tibetan human rights, in her official capacity, in China? Will they or not?

**Hon. George Smitherman:** The honourable member knows well that the Minister of Economic Development and Trade is making a trip in her official capacity.

The Premier, in his answer to questions—as I said a second ago—yesterday or perhaps it was the day before, indicated that as a matter of course, in any such trip are the opportunities to be engaged with officials and to let them know of the viewpoints that are being expressed more broadly.

I think if the honourable members took a little bit more interest in the actual words that were expressed, or, in fact, reviewed Hansard after it's been printed, they would gain a greater degree of confidence.

We operate sometimes in a very, very public way, and our responsibilities also encourage us to work in different ways. It's not only about being able to go out and to participate in rallies. The work of government requires—

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Thank you. New question.

### RESEARCH AND INNOVATION

**Mrs. Liz Sandals:** My question is for the Minister of Research and Innovation.

In my riding, at the University of Guelph's Biodiversity Institute of Ontario, Dr. Hebert and his team are working on a world-class DNA research project called the International Barcode of Life.

Dr. Hebert invented DNA barcoding in 2003. It's a fast and efficient method used to identify plant, insect and animal life. This project involves over 100 scientists from 25 countries coming together to compile the largest DNA-based species identification system in the world.

Dr. Hebert's research will develop a unique barcode to catalogue DNA records of the world's living things. It's making Ontario a leader on the global stage.

What is the Ministry of Research and Innovation doing, Minister, to support this cutting-edge research?

**Hon. John Wilkinson:** I want to thank the member for her tireless advocacy, both for her community of Guelph and particularly the University of Guelph, of which she and her family are quite proud.

I had the privilege of visiting the University of Guelph's Biodiversity Institute of Ontario last February, with the member, and previous to that. At the University of Guelph, researchers are not only doing world-class research, but they're also doing world-first research.

DNA is the unique fingerprint of all life on this planet, and this technology aims to allow for virtually instant DNA identification by simply scanning a specimen with a hand-held device. So, I am proud to report that my ministry is investing some \$5 million into this project to support world-class research.

Moreover, we've invested another \$150,000 to help international collaborations. Just last month, the government of New South Wales in Australia pledged some \$1.2 million to this international project—

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Thank you. Supplementary.

**Mrs. Liz Sandals:** I'd like to thank the minister for his interest in the project. When he visited in the winter to announce the \$5 million in funding for innovative research, the researchers at the Barcode of Life were just absolutely thrilled with the news.

But, Minister, biodiversity has some implications for the world economy. One of the challenges that a lot of jurisdictions face is invasive species. In fact, the flower growers' association, which has its headquarters in my



riding, is quite concerned with what happens when shipments cross the border. If there's a pest found, it takes weeks to sort out what it is, and by then the flowers are dead. So there are implications for this for the world economy and for our economy.

1500

I'm wondering if you can explain what impact this sort of research funding will have on Ontario—

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Thank you. Minister?

**Hon. John Wilkinson:** Thank you for the supplementary. We believe that our government can take global challenges and seize them and make them global opportunities. When we talk about the International Barcode of Life project, there are a number of benefits.

The first thing would be to facilitate trade. Dangerous biological products can cross international boundaries. So just think, if we were able, at the border, to identify the species, decide what is something that we don't want in our country and something that we need to keep out. That is a common theme with all of the countries around the world as they worry about the problem of invasive species.

It's a wonderful way for us to be able to do quicker environmental assessments, because we'll be able to quickly identify what life forms are in an area where we have an interest in doing an environmental assessment.

You can imagine the crop devastation that could be prevented by quickly scanning a fungus in a shipload of fruit or being able to identify the exact species of mosquito that may carry an infectious disease.

This is important for the world, and we're glad to be playing our—

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** New question.

## TOBACCO CONTROL

**Mr. Peter Shurman:** My question is for the Minister of Health Promotion. Yesterday, in response to a question from the member for Etobicoke North, the minister stated, "We are reliant on strong partnerships to achieve our goals. My ministry officials have been in regular discussions with the Ontario Convenience Stores Association...."

"As with any new legislation, we recognize the challenges faced by those most affected. We are working with all partners to ensure a smooth implementation."

Just 24 hours earlier, I received an e-mail from Mr. Dave Bryans, the president of that association, in which he expressed some serious concerns, one related to the physical and financial impossibility of meeting display specifications by the May 31 deadline. He stated, "We are concerned the over 200 tobacco enforcement officers will use their heavy-hand-of-the-law approach on small business without any assistance or compassion for the timeline predicament we are in."

The minister's words, tone and content appear at odds with Mr. Bryans's message because his members are not

partners; they're victims. I would ask the minister if she wishes to correct her statement with regard to how—

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Minister of Health Promotion.

**Hon. Margaret R. Best:** I would like to refer the member to the first reading. When this bill was first read in this House on December 15, 2004, and first introduced by the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care, he said, "There's another component to this bill that deserves particular attention: our retail display ban. We have all walked into convenience stores and seen elaborate countertop displays promoting smoking precisely at the eye level of young children. Does anyone really believe that it is somehow acceptable for cigarettes to be mixed with Twizzlers and hockey cards for the benefit of young consumers?" The industry knew this was coming for over three years.

**Mr. Peter Shurman:** My experience in communications suggests to me that the minister's response and the message from this significant stakeholder group are diametrically opposed. I have irrefutable evidence in my hand that says to me she may have misled this House.

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** The member knows that that's not an appropriate word. I would ask that you withdraw the word you just used.

**Mr. Peter Shurman:** No, I'm not prepared to withdraw that, sir. This is irrefutable evidence.

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** I would ask once again that the member withdraw the word.

**Mr. Peter Shurman:** I will not withdraw the word.

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** This is your final warning. Would you please withdraw the comment that you made?

**Interjection:** It's accurate.

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** I name the member from Thornhill and ask the Sergeant-at-Arms to escort him from the chamber, please.

*Mr. Shurman was escorted from the chamber.*

## WORKPLACE SAFETY

**Mr. Paul Miller:** I'd like to direct my question to the Minister of Labour. Yesterday, I raised the case of Gordie Heffern, who died in 2001 from injuries he suffered in an explosion at a Sudbury nickel refinery. His employer was prosecuted by the labour ministry and fined \$375,000. In the year after the incident and the year the fine was levied, the employer received rebates from the WSIB totalling \$5 million, far exceeding the fine. The outrageous rebates that went to Gordie Heffern's employer following his tragic death flow from a deeply flawed WSIB program called experience rating.

I'd like an answer today. Will you announce the end to experience rating programs now?

**Hon. Brad Duguid:** On behalf of all of us in this Legislature, let me extend condolences to the Heffern family and all injured workers and all families who have lost loved ones to workplace fatalities.



This government and the WSIB are very committed to doing all that we can to bring down workplace fatalities. We're committed to bringing down workplace injuries as well. The WSIB, under the leadership of Mr. Mahoney, has made some great inroads, working in partnership with our Ministry of Labour, to do that. We're well on the road to reaching our goal of a 20% reduction in workplace injuries.

The incentive program that the member talks about—as I said yesterday, as I said the day before and probably the day before that—is under review right now by the WSIB. We look forward to the outcome of that review. We recognize that the incentive program has flaws, and we look forward to it being corrected.

**Mr. Paul Miller:** Yesterday the minister claimed that the experience rating policy had real problems. The chair of the board recently claimed, until a few weeks ago, that he didn't know about the large payouts to companies. I myself attended a rally in December with injured workers in front of the WSIB offices. The minister spoke, and that day promised action. A staff member from the OFL handed the minister's staff papers on these very issues and other issues in front of the board. We've been after this for 10 years, through the OFL, to change this.

Once again, will the minister end this outrageous experience rating program now?

**Hon. Brad Duguid:** I've made it clear that this government agrees that there is a need to reform the experience rating system. I think we've made it abundantly clear. The chair of the WSIB agrees with that as well, and that is why that review is being conducted.

I spoke with the chair as recently as yesterday about these matters and, indeed, the chair is eager to move forward with a solution and to potentially move forward even more quickly than he initially wanted and suggested he would.

The key here is to look at the record of this government when it comes to injured workers: an increase of 2.5% in July for injured workers, an increase of 2.5% last January, an increase of 2.5% coming forward in this January coming up. Compare that with the record of the party opposite. They brought in the Friedland formula. That is the formula—the Tories made it even worse—that created an environment so that injured workers fell further and further behind.

This government is—

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Thank you. New question?

#### COMMUNITY COLLEGES COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

**Ms. Leeanna Pendergast:** My question is for the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities. I know that our government made a commitment before the last provincial election in August 2007 that we would extend collective bargaining rights to part-time college employees. Currently in Ontario, about 50% of all college employees are prohibited from joining a bargaining unit

under the Colleges Collective Bargaining Act. This means that almost 9,000 academic and almost 9,000 support staff do not have the right to be organized.

Many of these employees work in my riding of Kitchener–Conestoga at Conestoga College and make a substantial contribution to the high-quality education that the McGuinty government has actively supported through the \$6.2-billion Reaching Higher plan.

Can the minister tell us when he will extend collective bargaining rights to part-time college workers, both in my riding and across the province?

1510

**Hon. John Milloy:** I'd like to begin by thanking the member for Kitchener–Conestoga for her question and for her commitment to post-secondary education. I'd also like to take this opportunity—and I'm sure all members would agree—to echo her praise and acknowledge the important contribution that part-time college workers make to Ontario's network of 24 community colleges.

Without that important work, we would not have been able to accomplish the many gains we've seen in that sector, as well as the university sector: 100,000 more students are attending post-secondary institutes in Ontario; 40% of 18- to 24-year-olds are participating in post-secondary education in our province; we have 110,000 more active apprentices today, 50,000 more than in 2003; and, according to a recent study, 91% of college graduates find jobs within six months of graduating, and 93% of employers are satisfied with their skills.

I want to end by saying that the government is serious about our commitment, and I want to—

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Thank you. Supplementary.

**Ms. Leeanna Pendergast:** I thank you for the re-affirmation of our government's commitment to extend collective bargaining rights for part-time college workers. It's good news for part-time employees at Conestoga College in my riding, and all across the province.

On August 30, 2007, as part of our government's commitment on the matter, Kevin Whitaker, chair of the Ontario Labour Relations Board, the College Relations Commission and the Education Relations Commission, was appointed to conduct a broad-based review of the Colleges Collective Bargaining Act, which had not been reviewed in nearly 20 years.

Is the minister able to provide members of the Legislature and part-time employees in Ontario with an update on the status of Kevin Whitaker's work?

**Hon. John Milloy:** I want to apologize to the member: I got so caught up in talking about the good things that are happening in post-secondary education that I didn't have a chance to reiterate our government's commitment to extend bargaining rights to part-time college workers. On February 1 this year, I was very pleased to receive the report by Mr. Whitaker. It has been placed on the website of the ministry. I want to thank him for his very thoughtful advice. I've had a chance to consult with many stakeholders involved in the issue. We're in the



process of analyzing the report, and I hope to report back to the Legislature in the near future.

### TOBACCO CONTROL

**Mr. Norm Miller:** My question is for the Minister of Small Business and Entrepreneurship. It remains unclear exactly how your government has been working with convenience store operators in this province on the retail display ban. Please tell the House exactly what action you have taken to help these small business operators, for whom you are responsible.

**Hon. Harinder S. Takhar:** I refer that to the Minister of Health Promotion.

**Hon. Margaret R. Best:** Our government is doing all we can to protect the health and well-being of Ontarians. That is why, effective May 31, 2008, the retail display of tobacco products will be banned. The ban is about saving lives and ensuring that the next generation of Ontarians do not pick up the habit of smoking.

We are working with our partners to ensure a smooth transition to the display ban, including the Ontario Convenience Stores Association, the Ontario Korean Businessmen's Association and the Canadian Council of Grocery Distributors, Ontario. Our Smoke-Free Ontario Act and this ban are about protecting lives. They're about the health of Ontarians.

**Mr. Norm Miller:** The question was to the Minister of Small Business and Entrepreneurship, to do with how he's helping out small business. I don't know why he's not answering the question. As the PC critic for small business and as a past businessman myself, I hear repeatedly about how heavy-handed enforcement officers have become. The truth is that they have no interest in helping small business comply with the new regulations, whether it's for an advertising ban, drinking water or any other regulation.

Why won't you help small business to comply by requiring enforcement officers to provide advice as part of the compliance process? Will you commit today to do this?

**Hon. Margaret R. Best:** Again, smoking kills 13,000 Ontarians and costs our health care system \$1.6 billion every year. It is also the number one preventable cause of death in Ontario. The tobacco display ban is about saving lives and ensuring that the next generation of Ontarians does not pick up the habit of smoking. We are working with our partners, and we have been working with them for the past two years, to prepare for this ban. We will continue to work with our partners until the ban becomes effective on May 31 this year. Since January of this year alone, public health officials have visited 5,500 tobacco vendors, informed them and talked with them about our display ban.

**Mr. Norm Miller:** On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: Doesn't the answer have to relate to the question?

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Next question, please. The member for Hamilton Centre.

**Ms. Andrea Horwath:** That would be news around here.

### HOME CARE

**Ms. Andrea Horwath:** My question is for the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. Without dancing around the issues, because I'm actually looking for a very specific number here, I ask the Minister of Health: What is the average wait time in Ontario to receive home care?

**Hon. George Smitherman:** The member may know that there is no measurement for waits related to home care. I can tell the honourable member that over the course of the last four years, through very substantial investments in home care, more than 80,000 additional people are receiving home care. I'm going to have announcements to make in very short order which will further enhance the resource for home care. Through our government's pioneering \$700-million, three-year plan for aging at home, we're going to even more dramatically support an array of services that can enhance the quality of life and allow more of our seniors to live on in the place they know and love, which is their home.

**Ms. Andrea Horwath:** I can let the minister know that there's a particular person in my riding, named Dean Smith, who's really not very happy about how long he's having to wait. The gentleman is 44 years old and is in a wheelchair. He needs help, and he needs it now. He applied for home care back in December, so he has waited four months. Finally, last week he found out that he has an appointment for an assessment—no home care yet; just an assessment. Would the minister tell Dean Smith and others with disabilities and health problems why they have to wait so long for an assessment, let alone the actual home care they need, in Dalton McGuinty's Ontario, and what he is going to do to guarantee that the home care is going to be there when the people of Ontario need it the most?

**Hon. George Smitherman:** First off, I would like to encourage other honourable members, as I have encouraged honourable members in other circumstances, where you have one particular situation pertaining to a constituent. Of course you can raise it with me here on the floor, but I would also encourage you to deal with the people in my office, especially Scott and Chris, who I think are well known around this place for working to try and address those constituents' challenges that do arise.

I want to say to the honourable member that, of course, I don't have information on the particular circumstance she raises, but evidence she has presented is that care is being arranged for the gentleman, and I think it is something we can see further enhancement around.

As I mentioned, our government's budget of this year does offer substantial new resources for home care. We all recognize that this is a growing-demand service in health care—80,000 additional clients per year so far—and our \$700-million aging-at-home initiative is going to further enhance the range of supports that can be offered



to individuals who are struggling and striving to stay in the place they love and know best—their home.

### GREENBELT

**Mr. Reza Moridi:** I have a question for the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. One of the McGuinty government's growing achievements first was protecting over 1.5 million acres of precious agricultural land and green space in the greenbelt and the Oak Ridges moraine. I know that many of my constituents like to take their families out of the city to relax and explore Ontario's vast agricultural land and green space. I have many local residents and activists in my riding who care deeply about protecting green space for their children and grandchildren. They want to see the greenbelt protected and sustained as a vibrant part of Ontario's landscape. The world has seen many greenbelts eroded over time by leapfrog development and loopholes in legislation.

Minister, can you ensure—

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Thank you. Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing?

1520

**Hon. Jim Watson:** Let me begin by thanking the member for Richmond Hill for his interest in the greenbelt and the Oak Ridges moraine. We have, in fact, fulfilled our 2003 campaign commitment by creating the greenbelt, which we're very, very proud of. We're protecting a total of 1.8 million acres of green space in the greater Golden Horseshoe—bigger than Prince Edward Island.

Let me just quote a study that came out a day or so ago from the Canadian Institute for Environmental Law and Policy—an excellent article in the *Globe and Mail* entitled "Ontario's Greenbelt a Model for the World." It says, "Ontario's greenbelt is positioned to be the most successful and the most useful greenbelt in the world."

We're acting on our commitment to consider expanding the greenbelt. There is a public consultation process going on right now. We've had a number of meetings, and in fact, if individuals would like to go to the meeting tonight, it's in Guelph—over 80 people are attending—or in Markham on April 30.

**Mr. Reza Moridi:** I am pleased to see that the government is committed to protecting the greenbelt and even expanding it to municipalities that see the benefits of green space and farmland for their communities. But Ontarians know that once green space is eroded, it's never going to come back. It takes a government's commitment to ensure that the greenbelt is protected. The report commends our Move 2020 investments and the grades 7 to 9 Ontario public school curriculum on the greenbelt as facets in helping to protect and encourage interest in the greenbelt.

I ask the minister: How is this government going to maintain and strengthen the greenbelt, and how can we prevent Ontario from going backward to the time of urban sprawl and unplanned growth?

**Hon. Jim Watson:** One of the first things the people of Ontario did was on October 10, 2007, when they spoke loud and clear that they wanted a party and a government in office that is going to bring forward progressive legislation like the greenbelt.

It is really quite sad and regrettable that the official opposition, the Conservative Party, votes against every piece of progressive legislation, whether it's the Smoke-Free Ontario Act or the greenbelt legislation. I would suggest that the Conservative Party go to the office of the Registrar General, change their name and remove the word "Progressive," because they are not a progressive party. They did not support the greenbelt.

We're proud of this legislation. Let me read you one quote from a letter to Premier McGuinty: "I congratulate you for recognizing that urban sprawl represents a major negative impact on the environment, from continued degradation to wild areas to overdependence on cars, loss of farmland, and pollution of air, water and soil.... Congratulations on this initiative." David Suzuki said this.

### HOSPITAL SERVICES

**Mrs. Christine Elliott:** My question is for the Minister of Health. As the minister will know, the Rouge Valley Health System is being forced to make significant cuts in order to balance their books. We've already heard the minister's response to the spectre of layoffs for nurses, but equally as disturbing is the fact that the entire in-patient mental health unit at the Ajax site is being closed and transferred to the Scarborough site.

Minister, how can you possibly justify closing an entire in-patient mental health unit in Durham region, which is one of the fastest-growing areas in Ontario?

**Hon. George Smitherman:** The question to me is how I could possibly justify such an action, when the question to the honourable member is: How could she and her predecessor have possibly justified the diminution of an entire acute care hospital, the Whitby hospital, to the remnants of an organization? How, in good conscience, can a member who is a putative leader of that party come with a viewpoint that would eliminate the health premium and \$3 billion in health care expenditure?

What is proposed will be subject to consultation locally. I encourage the honourable member to participate in that—she has received a letter from the chair of the local health integration network on that issue.

What is proposed is a consolidation to one site of a program will have exactly the same capacity, and enhance the crisis capacity at the Ajax site.

**Mrs. Christine Elliott:** I can tell the minister that I've heard from doctors and nurses, I've heard from constituents from all over Durham region, including this government's own member from Ajax-Pickering, who is reading a petition against the closure there. So obviously there's a very big concern about this, and there are going to be hundreds of people coming to a public meeting tonight, as the minister may know. Lakeridge Health



Oshawa is the only other place in Durham region with in-patient mental health beds. They're currently operating at 100% capacity, and they send their overflow to the Ajax hospital.

Balancing the books is important, but putting vulnerable, ill people at risk is something altogether different. This is a very big issue of concern, and to suggest that a person from Clarington is going to go to Scarborough for treatment is completely unrealistic.

Minister, fortunately, there's a solution here. Will you commit to designating funds from the population growth-based funding that you have promised to ensure that the Ajax site doesn't have to close their in-patient mental health beds?

**Hon. George Smitherman:** They're not closing it; they're transferring it. With respect to the member from Ajax-Pickering and indeed the member from Pickering-Scarborough East, I totally appreciate that they're speaking up on behalf of their communities, but they're in a far more powerful position to be able to do so because they're not part of a party that proposes to reduce health care spending, as we speak, by \$3 billion.

This is the incoherence in Conservative Party policy. Funding for addictions and mental health in the Central East local health integration network has increased by 84.5% since 2003. In real terms, when that member's party first came to office, Lakeridge Health Corp., just as one example, was cut by \$4.29 million—3.03%. That is where we stand different. There is an 84.5% investment in mental health and addictions on our side; direct funding cuts to hospitals on their side.

## PETITIONS

### LORD'S PRAYER

**Mr. Ernie Hardeman:** I notice that it helped to be recognized during the question period so that I could get on the petition motion. I have a petition here:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the current Liberal government is proposing to eliminate the Lord's Prayer from daily proceedings in the Ontario Legislature; and

"Whereas the recitation of the Lord's Prayer has opened the Legislature every day since the 19th century; and

"Whereas the Lord's Prayer's message of forgiveness and the avoidance of evil is universal to the human condition; it is a valuable guide and lesson for a chamber that is too often an arena of conflict; and

"Whereas recognizing the diversity of the people of Ontario should be an inclusive process, not one which excludes traditions such as the Lord's Prayer;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, ask the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to preserve the daily recitation of the Lord's Prayer by the Speaker in the Legislature."

I thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to present this petition on behalf of my constituents.

### HOME CARE

**M<sup>me</sup> France Gélinas:** I have a petition from the people of Brampton and Mississauga and SEIU.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ontario government has continued the practice of competitive bidding for home care services; and

"Whereas the competitive bidding process has increased the privatization of Ontario's health care delivery, in direct violation of the Commitment to the Future of Medicare Act, 2004; and

"Whereas competitive bidding for home care services has decreased both the continuity and quality of care available to home care clients; and

"Whereas home care workers do not enjoy the same employment rights, such as successor rights, as all other Ontario workers have, which deprives them of termination rights, seniority rights and the right to move with their work when their employer agency loses a contract;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"We call on the government of Ontario:

"(1) to immediately stop the competitive bidding for home care services so home care clients can receive the continuity and quality of care they deserve; and

"(2) to extend successor rights under the Labour Relations Act to home care workers to ensure the home care sector is able to retain a workforce that is responsive to clients' needs."

I fully support this petition. I will affix my name to it and send it through Ida.

### FIREARMS CONTROL

**Mr. Mike Colle:** "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas innocent people are being victimized by the growing number of unlawful firearms in our communities; and

"Whereas only police officers, military personnel and lawfully licensed persons are the only people allowed to possess firearms; and

"Whereas a growing number of unlawful firearms are transported, smuggled and found in motor vehicles; and

"Whereas impounding motor vehicles and suspending driver's licences of persons possessing unlawful firearms in motor vehicles would aid the police in their efforts to make our streets safer;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to pass Bill 56, the Unlawful Firearms in Vehicles Act, 2008, into law, so that we can reduce the number of crimes involving firearms in our communities."

I support this petition and affix my name to it.

1530

## LORD'S PRAYER

**Ms. Sylvia Jones:** "To the Legislative Assembly:

"Whereas the current Liberal government is proposing to eliminate the Lord's Prayer from its place at the beginning of daily proceedings in the Ontario Legislature; and

"Whereas the recitation of the Lord's Prayer has opened the Legislature every day since the 19th century; and

"Whereas the Lord's Prayer's message is one of forgiveness, of providing for those in need of their 'daily bread' and of preserving us from the evils that we may fall into; it is a valuable guide and lesson for a chamber that is too often an arena for conflict; and

"Whereas recognizing the diversity of the people of Ontario should be an inclusive process, not one which excludes traditions such as the Lord's Prayer;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, ask the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to preserve the daily recitation of the Lord's Prayer by the Speaker in the Legislature."

I support this petition and I'm pleased to assign my name to it and give it to Jordynne.

## INTERNATIONAL TRADE

**Mr. Michael Prue:** I have a petition that reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas, amid global condemnation of China's human rights track record, witnessed by mass protests around the Olympic torch relay in London, Paris and San Francisco, many world leaders are now contemplating boycotting the opening ceremonies of the Beijing Olympics; and

"Whereas, as Canadians and Ontarians, we believe it is our moment to put moral pressure on Chinese leaders in Beijing to improve the rights of Tibetans and to bring about a positive and meaningful respite for those in Tibet who still suffer under oppression by the Chinese government;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To call off Economic Trade and Development Minister Sandra Pupatello's trade mission to China to formally open a new Ontario International Marketing Centre; and

"To condemn the Chinese government for its brutal crackdown on peaceful protests and violation of human rights in Tibet."

I give it to page Michael.

FEDERAL-PROVINCIAL  
FISCAL POLICIES

**Mr. Tony Ruprecht:** I have a petition. The subject is that the average Ontario worker is getting \$4,000 less by

way of employment insurance than Canadians living in other provinces. The petition reads:

"Whereas, even though job creation in Ontario is far outpacing job loss, one lost job is one too many; and

"Whereas last year the average unemployed worker in Ontario received \$5,110 in regular EI benefits while the average unemployed person in the rest of Canada received \$9,070;"—that's a \$4,000 difference—"and

"Whereas, on average, the federal government provides an unemployed worker in Ontario with \$684 less for job training than it provides for an unemployed worker in another province; and

"Whereas fair funding could mean additional investments in important areas such as enhanced apprenticeship programs, labour market integration for new immigrants, and skills training for older workers; and

"Whereas Ontario workers deserve the same opportunities as other Canadians to improve their skills, find meaningful work, contribute to Canada's prosperity and support their families;

"We, the undersigned, therefore petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to press the federal government to be fair to Ontario workers by providing equal funding for employment insurance benefits and job training compared to other provinces."

Since I agree with this petition, I am delighted to sign it as well.

## LORD'S PRAYER

**Mr. Norm Miller:** I have a number of petitions here to do with the Lord's Prayer.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Premier Dalton McGuinty has called on the Ontario Legislature to consider removing the Lord's Prayer from its daily proceedings; and

"Whereas the recitation of the Lord's Prayer has opened the Legislature every day since the 19th century; and

"Whereas the Lord's Prayer's message is one of forgiveness, of providing for those in need of their 'daily bread' and of preserving us from the evils we may fall into; it is a valuable guide and lesson for a chamber that is too often an arena of conflict; and

"Whereas recognizing the diversity of the people of Ontario should be an inclusive process, not one which excludes traditions such as the Lord's Prayer;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, ask the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to preserve the daily recitation of the Lord's Prayer by the Speaker in the Legislature."

I support this and have signed the petition.

## HOSPITAL FUNDING

**Mr. Kuldip Kular:** "Petition to the Ontario Legislative Assembly:

"Western Mississauga Ambulatory Surgery Centre.

"Whereas wait times for access to surgical procedures in the western GTA area served by the Mississauga



Halton LHIN are growing despite the vigorous capital project activity at the hospitals within the Mississauga Halton LHIN boundaries; and

"Whereas 'day surgery' procedures could be performed in an off-site facility, thus greatly increasing the ability of surgeons to perform more procedures, alleviating wait times for patients and freeing up operating theatre space in hospitals for more complex procedures that may require post-operative intensive care unit support and a longer length of stay in hospital;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care allocate funds in its 2008-09 capital budget to begin planning and construction of an ambulatory surgery centre located in western Mississauga to serve the Mississauga-Halton area and enable greater access to 'day surgery' procedures that comprise about four fifths of all surgical procedures performed."

I agree with the petitioners, so I'll also put my signature on the petition.

#### LORD'S PRAYER

**Mr. Frank Klees:** I am pleased to present this petition. As you can see, there are literally thousands of names that have been delivered to my constituency office. It reads as follows:

"Petition to the Parliament of Ontario:

"Whereas Premier Dalton McGuinty has called on the Ontario Legislature to consider removing the Lord's Prayer from its daily proceedings; and

"Whereas the Lord's Prayer has been an integral part of our parliamentary heritage that was first established in 1793 under Lieutenant Governor John Graves Simcoe; and

"Whereas the Lord's Prayer is today a significant part of the religious heritage of millions of Ontarians of culturally diverse backgrounds;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario to continue its long-standing practice of using the Lord's Prayer as part of its daily proceedings."

I am pleased to affix my signature in support of this petition.

#### ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

**Mr. Jean-Marc Lalonde:** I have a petition here with hundreds of names. It comes from Pendleton, Curran and Plantagenet—

**Mr. Wayne Arthurs:** Vankleek Hill?

**Mr. Jean-Marc Lalonde:** Vankleek Hill is in there too, yes. Thank you.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas we, the concerned citizens of Pendleton and surrounding area, oppose construction of an ethanol plant/biodigester 500 metres from the village;....

"Whereas concerns of water consumption, as an ethanol plant uses approximately 14 million litres per year, the hog operation uses over 20 million litres per year, five irrigation systems, and we already have some elevated nitrate levels, and there will be land erosion due to excessive corn cultivation;....

"Whereas economic development concerns for our three campgrounds, golf course, restaurant and recreation trail;....

"Whereas increased financial concerns, as we will all need a water filtration system;....

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the provincial government introduce legislation requiring that all construction of mega-hog operations, biodigesters and ethanol plants be restricted to a proximity of a minimum of 3.5 kilometres from any village."

#### LORD'S PRAYER

**Mr. Ted Chudleigh:** "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the current Liberal government is proposing to eliminate the Lord's Prayer from its place at the beginning of daily proceedings in the Ontario Legislature; and

"Whereas the recitation of the Lord's Prayer has opened the Legislature every day since the 19th century;"—I believe it was 1873—"and

"Whereas the Lord's Prayer's message of forgiveness and the avoidance of evil is universal to the human condition; it is a valuable guide and lesson for a chamber that is too often an arena of conflict; and

"Whereas recognizing the diversity of the people of Ontario should be an inclusive process, not one which excludes traditions such as the Lord's Prayer;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, ask the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to preserve the daily recitation of the Lord's Prayer by the Speaker in the Legislature."

I'm pleased to sign this and to give it to Marco, our page, to take to the table.

1540

#### ANTI-SMOKING LEGISLATION

**Mr. Bob Delaney:** I have a petition sent to me by a great many people from the city of Peterborough. It's addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario and it reads as follows:

"Whereas children exposed to second-hand smoke are at a higher risk for respiratory illnesses including asthma, bronchitis and pneumonia, as well as sudden infant death syndrome ... and increased incidences of cancer and heart disease in adulthood; and

"Whereas the Ontario Medical Association supports a ban on smoking in vehicles when children are present, as they have concluded that levels of second-hand smoke can be 23 times more concentrated in a vehicle than in a

house because circulation is restricted within a small space; and

"Whereas the Ipsos Reid poll conducted on behalf of the Ontario Tobacco-Free Network indicates that eight in 10 ... Ontarians support 'legislation that would ban smoking in cars and other private vehicles where a child or adolescent under 16 years of age is present'; and

"Whereas Nova Scotia, California, Puerto Rico, and South Australia recently joined several jurisdictions of the United States of America in banning smoking in vehicles carrying children;

"We, the undersigned, respectfully petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to approve Bill 11 and amend the Smoke-Free Ontario Act to ban smoking in vehicles carrying children 16 years of age and under."

It's an excellent petition. I'm pleased to sign and support it and ask page Kelsey to carry it for me.

### GO TRANSIT

**Mr. Ted Chudleigh:** "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas GO Transit:

"—has been plagued with frequent service disruptions, often leading to trip cancellations and stranding passengers at GO stations;

"—has consistently shown poor on-time performance, which declines each year;

"—has blamed many of the disruptions on long-delayed construction projects it has recently undertaken;...

"—fails to provide accurate information when major delays occur;

"—shows little regard for passengers' schedules or concerns; and

"—just approved a fare hike effective March 15 ... in spite of consistently poor performance and customer service;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"—to require GO Transit to provide a rebate on fares paid when GO Transit equipment failure, late arrival of equipment, staff shortage or rail congestion results in a cancellation of trains or a delay of more than 20 minutes to final destination;" and further,

"—better and more timely notification of transit cancellations, modifications and delays; and" further again,

"—more cars added to trains to ease the overcrowding, which causes safety concerns."

I agree with this petition. I'm glad to pass it to Victoria, our page, who will take it to the table.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson):** The time for petitions has expired.

**Mr. Ted Chudleigh:** On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: To the member for Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, I understand that there is a hockey game tonight that you're very involved with in Quebec City, and I wish you

the best of luck and that your team will become victorious in that series.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson):** That's not a point of order, but good luck.

### ORDERS OF THE DAY

#### INVESTING IN ONTARIO ACT, 2008

#### LOI DE 2008 PERMETTANT D'INVESTIR DANS L'ONTARIO

Resuming the debate adjourned on April 7, 2008, on the motion for second reading of Bill 35, An Act to authorize the Minister of Finance to make payments to eligible recipients out of money appropriated by the Legislature and to amend the Fiscal Transparency and Accountability Act, 2004, the Ministry of Treasury and Economics Act and the Treasury Board Act, 1991 / Projet de loi 35, Loi autorisant le ministre des Finances à faire des versements aux bénéficiaires admissibles sur les crédits affectés par la Législature et modifiant la Loi de 2004 sur la transparence et la responsabilité financières, la Loi sur le ministère du Trésor et de l'Économie et la Loi de 1991 sur le Conseil du Trésor.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson):** Debate?

**Mr. Tim Hudak:** I'm pleased to rise and debate on Bill 35, An Act to authorize the Minister of Finance to make payments to eligible recipients out of money appropriated by the Legislature and to amend the Fiscal Transparency and Accountability Act, 2004, the Ministry of Treasury and Economics Act and the Treasury Board Act, 1991. I know my colleague from Oxford will be speaking later on this bill, among some others here, on behalf of the official opposition. As finance critic, I'm pleased to respond in that capacity as well. I know my colleague Mr. O'Toole, from Durham, did an outstanding job with his critic's response, a one-hour speech just the other night, outlining a number of concerns that the Ontario PC caucus has with Bill 35 and the way it was presented. I'll echo some of those concerns and add others as well.

You may remember that about a week or so before the budget, Finance Minister Duncan staged a press conference with a number of municipal representatives, where he trumpeted that municipalities would be receiving hundreds of millions of dollars in surplus funds as a result of legislation he was going to table in the near future. Finance Minister Duncan, whether he said this directly or not, certainly gave the impression to the media and to members of the assembly that the surplus would be approximately \$800 million or more, and any funds above \$600 million would be distributed to municipalities on a per capita basis.

In reality, however, I think municipalities had their eyes opened—we in the opposition really didn't have our eyes opened too much, because it's kind of par for the course. It was not really surprising, in the grand scheme



of things, that a McGuinty minister would say one thing and then reality would be something else. We've seen that movie before. This was just the latest rerun of that program. What happened, in reality, was that when the finance minister presented his budget, he had a projected surplus of \$600 million, not the \$800-million impression that was given to stakeholders at the time, and projecting in the future, if I remember accurately, no surpluses in subsequent years.

Let me point out too that it didn't have to be that way. In reality, the finance minister had some \$5 billion more in revenue than he projected in the 2007-08 budget the previous spring—\$5 billion in revenue largely squeezed out of the already hard-pressed pocketbooks of working families and seniors in Ontario. If he intended to give municipalities funds of the surplus in excess of \$600 million, he would have had \$4.4 billion to hand out if he so desired. What the finance minister chose to do instead, however, was go on a mad-money end-of-year spending spree and shovel pretty well all those dollars right out the door, many with no strings attached, meaning that he didn't hit the \$800-million surplus that he gave the impression was about to come forward.

The other thing that was surprising to some—I guess not really surprising to us in the opposition—was that the words “municipalities” and “infrastructure” are nowhere to be mentioned in Bill 35. It's kind of surprising to those who may have been taking the finance minister at his word, because he indicated that this bill would send funds to municipalities for infrastructure. However, when you look through the bill, not once does the word “municipality” or the word “infrastructure” appear. The reality is that under this act, if it were to pass, “eligible recipient” means “a person or entity, other than an individual but including a partnership whose members may be individuals, that does not carry on activities for the purpose of gain or profit.”

It's harder to imagine a more broad definition of “eligible recipient” than the one contained in Bill 35. Granted, because of accounting principles, hospitals couldn't receive these funds. Some may say that if there were excess funds, hospitals may be a priority to many Ontarians. But hospitals now laying off nurses—the Rouge River site—could not be recipients under this definition. Similarly, under this particular definition in Bill 35, the colleges sector is not an eligible recipient of funds in a surplus larger than the one projected. As well, school boards would not be eligible for those funds.

1550

It could be a bit of an issue, I know, in Niagara-on-the-Lake, in St. Catharines, in its proposed closure of the Niagara District Secondary School, by way of example. I know that's caused quite an uproar in that part of Niagara. I think those families would be surprised to learn that, while pretty well everybody else under the sun is eligible for these funds, school boards would not be. Parents whose children go to Blessed Trinity high school, for example, in Grimsby, or St. Joseph in Grimsby, which has been overdue for a rebuild, would not receive funds from this bill.

#### *Interjection.*

**Mr. Tim Hudak:** However, my colleague from Halton rightly points out that the world's most famous cricket club—the Ontario cricket club—would be eligible to receive funding under the definition of eligible recipient in Bill 35. Now, you probably wonder why the member for Halton would ask about cricket clubs, of all associations.

I think all members of the assembly and the general public remember very well the infamous slush fund grant of the Dalton McGuinty government just under a year ago. It gripped this assembly when it was found out that this hidden fund had no application form at all. There was no press release. There was nothing on the ministry's website to say how to apply to these funds.

But if you knew somebody in the Liberal Party, if you were an active Liberal member yourself, you seemed to have more access than the general public. In fact, it could be fairly described that it was not what you do, it's who you knew in the Ontario Liberal Party that gained you access to those funds.

The tale of the Ontario cricket club was one of the more infamous slush fund grants. You may remember: They had put in a request for \$150,000, and the then-minister at the time—complicit with the finance minister at the time and, I suspect, other members of cabinet—decided that a \$1-million grant was more appropriate. We all know what happened at that point in time. That was more money than the cricket club could spend, and they socked away, I think, \$500,000 of it or so.

**Mr. Ted Chudleigh:** It was \$750,000.

**Mr. Tim Hudak:** My friend from Halton says “\$750,000” in investment vehicles, because they couldn't spend the money at the time.

Taxpayers across Ontario were absolutely outraged at this abuse of funds, of taxpayer dollars for political purposes. There were other examples, my friends here in the assembly remember, where there were grants given out where no application form was given. There were grants given out where not even a letter of request was given. The money was just sort of handed out, based on who you met with in the minister's office or the Liberal Party.

Sadly, Bill 35 basically seems to want to legalize these types of slush funds by having eligible recipients like the Ontario cricket club qualify for funding when hospitals or school boards or colleges do not.

So, if you were to take the minister at his description, you'd expect that this would be going—in the legislation, it would say “municipalities” and “infrastructure.” It says no such thing, with the broadest definition imaginable of who these funds could go to.

Furthermore, this bill, if passed, under section 3 would give extraordinary regulation-making authority to the Lieutenant Governor in Council—a.k.a. cabinet—to decide the terms of these types of grants. So, instead of saying it would go to municipalities for infrastructure, as the minister indicated, cabinet could basically prescribe eligible recipients and classes of eligible recipients for



the act, prescribe the purposes for which payments may be made under this act, prescribe a method of and basis of calculation for payments etc.

You talk about a Mack-truck loophole. That's an understatement. That's a microcosm of the broad powers that the government wants to grant itself to dole out slush funds, if this act were passed.

We in the Progressive Conservative Party believe that if you have additional funds at the end of the year—if you have a windfall, for example, that wasn't expected—it should go towards paying your debt. Average working families in the province of Ontario would use it to pay off their credit cards, for example, or help to pay down the mortgage. They wouldn't use those funds to go out and rack up even more bills.

But instead of sensibly ensuring that additional unexpected funds would go towards paying down debt and showing some constraint, the government wants to give itself the authority to spend that money after the books have actually closed for the fiscal year. We believe that is a reckless response by the government, particularly in light of the broad range of eligible recipients that they deem could receive funding under Bill 35, the way it was written. I know my colleagues opposite probably believed the minister when he said it was going to municipalities for infrastructure under the act. I know if the amendments move forward to restrict it to municipalities for infrastructure, they will surely vote for those types of amendments moved at committee, and we look forward to their support in that.

Let me also note that the government is moving away from down payments on the debt. This act would give them the ability to define any dollar figure as to when these slush funds would kick in. In reality, this bill would give the minister the ability to pay down maybe a dollar of debt at most and spend the rest, which is very unfortunate because, as you're probably aware—and maybe Liberal members have not been told this by their finance minister—the total debt under the Liberal government has increased by some \$19 billion: \$148.733 billion to \$167.844 billion under the Liberal government, or a 12.8% increase. At a time when tax revenues have gone through the roof, largely because of Dalton McGuinty's higher taxes and more generous transfers from the Conservative government in Ottawa to the province of Ontario, despite that, they go out and spend every dollar and then some. We've seen Ontario's total debt increase by approximately 13% in the first mandate of the McGuinty government.

The reality is, this government doesn't have a revenue problem; they have a spending problem. Program spending under the Dalton McGuinty government has gone up some 48%, which is absolutely phenomenal. We often think of the David Peterson Liberals as the poster children for irresponsible, reckless, runaway spending.

**Mr. Lou Rinaldi:** Oh, Tim, Tim.

**Mr. Tim Hudak:** I know my friend from Northumberland is upset with that because he knows, as I do, that Dalton McGuinty has left the David Peterson Liberals in the dust when it comes to runaway spending.

**Mr. Lou Rinaldi:** Good investments in Ontario, Tim.

**Mr. Tim Hudak:** My colleague seems to be saying that the David Peterson government made good investments in the province of Ontario, but I think Ontarians rendered a different verdict after they saw the runaway spending, the record deficits and the recession that was brought on by the Peterson tax-and-spend policies.

I think you know, Mr. Speaker, that we're seeing similar policies with the McGuinty government of tax and spend, with higher taxes on working families, seniors and businesses; in fact, the highest taxes on business investment in all of Canada and North America. But for every dollar brought in, they spend that and then some, driving up total debt and bringing Ontario to the brink of a Dalton McGuinty recession.

It was a bit ironic: Shortly after the press conference, some municipal politicians caught on to the ruse of the press conference versus what was actually in the legislation. Carolyn Parrish, a Mississauga councillor who's famous for some interesting quotes, said about the Liberals, "They are playing games with us." She spoke about Mayor McCallion, who was "willing to take crumbs. I'm not." So Councillor Parrish certainly had some very strong language about the Liberal government, which is odd considering she was a federal Liberal member for some time and has certainly seen through the charade of what the government is trying to accomplish in legalizing these particular slush funds.

The other point I want to make is that this bill is permissive on a go-forward basis. It's not time-limited. It's not simply fiscal 2007-08, nor is it simply for 2008-09. If this bill were to pass, it would mean, going forward, that it would legalize this ability of the government to create slush funds and spend them after the fiscal year had expired on March 31. The government has not expressed any intent whatsoever as to how they're going to spend future years' funding. While they pinky-swear that it will go to municipalities in 2007-08, despite the fact that the surplus came in lower than the minister seemed to hint it would, who knows what the McGuinty Liberals will come up with for the next fiscal year of 2008-09?

1600

As I described, when you see programs like the infamous cricket club, when you see—I don't know if I can use this word in the Legislature—the Flick Off campaign, for example, which I think many would agree was a tremendous waste of funds in terms of what it failed to accomplish and was rather embarrassing, I know, to many government members, you wonder exactly what the plans are in the McGuinty government, given that track record, to do in future fiscal years.

Federally, the Paul Martin Liberal government did bring forward similar legislation, upon which I think this finance minister—who I think is a strong supporter of Paul Martin, or was at the time—has based his new one. The federal bill, which was C-48 at the time, actually had much more detail in the legislation itself, indicating where those funds were going to be spent. For example, Bill C-48, in Parliament for fiscal years 2005-06 and 2006-07, said it would allocate payments:



“(a) for the environment, including for public transit and for an energy-efficient retrofit program for low-income housing, an amount not exceeding \$900 million;

“(b) for supporting training programs and enhancing access to post-secondary education, to benefit, among others, aboriginal Canadians, an amount not exceeding \$1.5 billion;

“(c) for affordable housing, including housing for aboriginal Canadians, an amount not exceeding \$1.6 billion; and

“(d) for foreign aid, an amount not exceeding \$500 million.”

If my information is correct—that was actually in the bill. So while the federal government made a similar attempt to spend surplus funds instead of putting them towards paying down debt, to spend them when there's an unexpected surplus, at least they had in the bill a detailed allocation of how much money for what particular projects, as opposed to Bill 35 before the Ontario assembly today, which is wide open and could fund anything from cricket clubs to—what else did I use?—the Flick Off campaign, by way of example of another infamous Liberal spending program.

The other difference in the federal bill, C-48, versus Bill 35 before the assembly today was its time-limited nature. As I indicated, it was for two fiscal years, 2005-06 and 2006-07. The bill before us, Bill 35, asks us to trust the Dalton McGuinty Liberal government for the rest of their mandate with this type of spending. It's a trust that we are not blindly, willingly about to go down.

The federal bill did finally expire. The other interesting point about this is that it was a coalition at the time. Remember, the NDP and the Liberals got together on this bill, which that was opposed by the federal Conservatives. After the 2006-07 fiscal year it was null and void.

The Auditor General here in the province of Ontario had some very, very strong comments about the Liberals' end-of-year spending, their penchant to take money that could be applied towards paying down debt, that could be applied to lowering the tax burden for working families and businesses, and instead blowing it out the door in slush funds with no strings attached. I think the Auditor General has done that for three or four consecutive years now. I know that similar concerns will arise with this bill that, if passed, would allow the government in the summertime, when public accounts come out, to contemplate another round of slush fund funding, four months or five months after the fiscal year is closed.

For those reasons and many others, I do recommend to members of the assembly to vote against Bill 35. At the very least, I do hope government members who support the bill will support Conservative amendments on this legislation.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson):** I thank the honourable member for his contribution to the debate. Questions and/or comments?

**Ms. Laurel C. Broten:** I think the debate on this bill highlights exactly the difference between the government

and the opposition. The opposition doesn't believe in investing in the province. They don't believe in investing in public services, because their track record, while they were in office, demonstrates that. Rather than invest in our public health care system while they were in office, they chose to fire nurses, to call them hula hoops, to continue to denigrate the system, to move our province to a two-tier health care system. When it came to their environmental record, their environmental record was horrible.

**Mr. Lou Rinaldi:** No record.

**Ms. Laurel C. Broten:** No record? Well, a very dismal record. As a parent, I have to say that I stand across the House and I think about this member, who also is a parent, and I think about the legacy that he has left his daughter when that government was in office: firing water inspectors, not protecting the environment, not tackling climate change in any way, turning a blind eye to pollution coming from our coal plants. I'm very proud of the steps our government took with respect to making sure that we took a stand with respect to the issue of climate change, implementing all of the recommendations made by Justice O'Connor in Walkerton and making it certain that you could turn on your tap in this province, have a glass of water and be assured that you, your child and your family would be safe.

Reference to the Flick Off campaign by Environmental Defence: It was a campaign brought forward by a leading environmental group in this country that has advocated for many, many years, that sought to bring the issue in an edgy, progressive fashion to make sure that the generation, perhaps younger than myself and the member from Niagara West—Glanbrook, that could make a difference, that could transform the way they live their lives, would have the opportunity to do so. As a government, I'm proud that we engaged that generation of leadership.

**Mr. Ted Chudleigh:** The member is interesting. She says that this party isn't interested in investing in Ontario. She calls this bill an investment in Ontario. This bill—understand that this bill is slush fund heaven. Before this bill is finished, everybody in Ontario is going to be promised a little payout from the slush fund. The cricket clubs all across the province are going to get their share. Every group in Ontario is going to get its share.

As the member for Niagara pointed out, there's no mention—the municipalities have been promised this slush fund, but there is no mention in the bill of municipalities. In fact, the way it's worded, the government could designate any group they wish, other than those groups that I think the people of Ontario would like to fund such as hospitals, colleges, universities, school boards and those kinds of things. They can't be funded by this slush fund heaven that the government is working on, but any other non-profit group in the province can be. Before this bill is finished, the government will promise this, not only to the municipalities that they've already promised it to—every mayor in Ontario thinks he's getting some money out of this. In fact, every organ-



ization and pressure group in Ontario will be promised this money, whether they get it or not. It's legalizing slush funds that will flow out the door with very little control over who gets it, how they spend it, where it goes and what benefits it creates for Ontario. I think if you surveyed Ontarians, you would find that the vast majority of Ontarians would see this kind of money going to hospitals, schools or universities as a good thing. It's not happening.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson):** Further questions and/or comments? Seeing none, the member for Oxford.

**Mr. Ernie Hardeman:** I want to thank the member from Erie—Lincoln for the explanations on the bill. I think it's very important. I was also taken by the description from the member from Halton, who kind of capsulized the long title of the bill into a much shorter title, which is "slush fund heaven." Obviously this bill, if you read it thoroughly, does exactly that: It provides the government the ability to do what they did just before the end of the year last year. The auditor said, "No, wait a minute, you shouldn't do that, because that's not accountable and transparent. You shouldn't do that." There's no legislation in place to have this slush fund, as the government wanted to have. So the government, of course, to listen to the auditor, said, "Well, we'll fix that. We won't change what we do with the slush fund, but we will give ourselves the authority to have a slush fund." That's what this bill is all about. I think it would be very well for the members of government and everyone in the province to understand that that's what it is. It's being portrayed as something totally different, but in fact it's not.

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If you read the bill, as was mentioned, the word "municipality" does not appear in the bill at all. In fact, it doesn't set the parameters of how much or how little surplus there would have to be in order for it to go to the eligible people. If you read the bill, the government, by regulation, can start from dollar one and put it all in the slush fund, and of course, from past practice we would have to assume that that's exactly what the government is going to do. If it's being designed to be slush fund heaven, I expect the intention of the government is to create that slush fund so they can proceed as they have in the past. We think that's the wrong approach to budgeting.

With that, I want to commend again the member from Niagara West—Glanbrook for doing a great job on this, and he did a great job the other night—I was watching on television—explaining how they were messing up with the budgeting process in the province.

**Mr. Wayne Arthurs:** It's a pleasure to take a couple of minutes and respond in part to the member from Niagara West—Glanbrook, as I get used to all the new riding names—you have to be quick on your feet around here or else you miss a window of opportunity.

This is yet another opportunity that presents itself for municipalities. I think we said earlier that when government has a good year in the province of Ontario and they

exceed the revenue capacity they anticipated, municipalities, as partners, should also have a good year. We certainly know about the infrastructure needs within the province. As early, I guess, as the 2006 budget under Minister Duncan—it was really an infrastructure budget, in which we concentrated our efforts on working with our municipal partners, because we know the needs they have, whether it's roads, water, sewers or other basic infrastructure in municipalities, those being among the most important, I would suggest.

This is an opportunity, when the province has a better year than anticipated, when it has an opportunity first to focus at least some portion of its surplus on debt repayment and finds itself in a position beyond that to be able to share with our municipal partners in a way that assists them, it's a very good thing for us to be doing. This is a piece of legislation that allows us to formalize that, so that when the books are finally complete and the public accounts are done and we know what the reality of the situation is, then we know what level of sharing can occur in all of the ridings throughout the province of Ontario. Not just government ridings, by any means, but each and every riding across the province of Ontario will be in a position to be a benefactor of our collective good times. We look forward to the opportunity of sharing with our municipal partners.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson):** The member for Niagara West—Glanbrook has up to two minutes to respond.

**Mr. Tim Hudak:** I thank my colleagues for their comments. Just to make sure—I know the member for Pickering—Scarborough East understands—if the government was truly interested in supporting municipal infrastructure first, they would have a program and prioritize that before the slush funds, as opposed to making them wait until the end of the year after the books are closed and after the slush funds are all paid out, hoping against hope that they'll receive some funding. If the member does believe the rhetoric coming from the finance minister, then I know he will support any amendments at committee to ensure that these funds will be dedicated to municipal infrastructure only, as opposed to the wide-open slush fund that the bill actually says.

The reality is that provincial investments in municipal infrastructure are important. That's why the previous PC government had a record investment in that type of infrastructure through the SuperBuild program—programs that the Liberals cancelled once they got into office, except, I think, the OSTAR RED program, and have now moved to this type of slush fund funding.

Provincial support for municipal infrastructure should be planned. They should know how much money is coming in each particular year, the qualifications for funding and that any competitive-based applications are fair and transparent. I know that municipalities like Grimsby, Pelham and West Lincoln, in my riding of Niagara West—Glanbrook, are perplexed. They had applied for funding through the MIII program, which was sort of cobbled together halfway through the fiscal



year—it wasn't part of last year's budget, and municipalities had to respond quickly. Those are three municipalities that had good projects, important projects in the communities, that did not receive funding, and I know other colleagues here did not receive funding. Those municipalities really have not been given a good answer, those in West Lincoln and Grimsby particularly, for why some projects were funded and those were not. We support a better way to support municipal infrastructure.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson):** Further debate?

**M. Jean-Marc Lalonde:** C'est avec grand plaisir que je participe à ce projet de loi 35. Ce projet de loi était longuement attendu. Quand je dis «longuement attendu», c'est un projet de loi qui va autoriser le ministre des Finances à faire des versements sur les crédits affectés par la Législature.

This has been long overdue. The opposition at the present time do not believe or do not listen to the message that the municipalities are passing on to all the members of the Ontario Legislature. Ever since the downloading, the municipalities haven't been able to afford the upkeep of the roads. Every municipality in Ontario is looking for money to fix their roads.

This is why the McGuinty government and the Minister of Finance, Dwight Duncan, this year came out with two projects. How did we arrive at those two projects? Very simple: In the past, and today it is the same until we pass that bill, the province did not know what surplus or deficit they would have before the month of July, until the Auditor General came out with his report, and the standing committee had to meet before it was introduced in the House or brought to the attention of the members of the Legislature.

Well, let me tell you, if this had been in place last year—we ended the year, I believe, with a \$2.2-billion surplus, but we only found that out in July. The law at the present time does not permit the government to transfer that money to the municipality. It has to go towards the debt of the province.

I can't believe that the opposition would not support this bill. If this bill had been in place in 2007, there would have been \$2.2 billion less \$600 million—\$1.6 billion—transferred to the municipalities so they could fix the roof of an arena, for example, fix the roads or fix social housing complexes.

But the McGuinty government is smarter than that. They look at every angle possible. They said, "We know that since the downloading to the municipalities, every single municipality in Ontario is looking for additional funds; otherwise they would have to increase the municipal taxes." They haven't done it because people, in rural municipalities especially, cannot afford an increase of 10%, 12% or 15% of their municipal taxes.

Out of that \$2.2 billion, \$1.6 billion would have been transferred to the municipalities. This is why this year we came up first with the MIII, with \$300 million, and it looked pretty good at the end of February. In March, we said, "The surplus is going to be a little higher." At the

ROMA conference, the Premier announced that we would add \$150 million to the MIII. That brings us up to \$450 million. Then, by the end of March, in the last three weeks of March, they realized that we were going to have a larger surplus after the Auditor General gave his report in July.

**1620**

We reviewed everything. The Minister of Finance, with his staff—we have to remember that the staff did a good job on this one. We have to thank our people working in the offices for all the good work they did. So they found out that, yes, we could come up with another billion dollars to help municipalities with roads and bridges. I think every one of us has seen what happened in Chatham this week, the big truck that went through the culvert on a highway. I forget the name of the truck; it's a large truck. If that bill had been passed last year, probably this wouldn't have occurred. The municipality could have had money to fix that road or to fix the bridge. At the present time, they didn't have the money.

Just to show you: The previous government had downloaded a lot of services to the municipality; social housing, for example. I have all the figures here with me, because I remember sitting on the other side, and a good friend—I shouldn't call him Ernie; I should call him by his riding—came across to me and said, "Jean-Marc, what are you doing? Are you preparing your hockey budget?" I said, "No; I had to figure out really what you people have done to the province of Ontario, to all the municipalities, in the downloading. I'm looking for the social housing in Prescott and Russell." The downloading gave us a shortfall of \$4.9 million just for social housing in the community of Prescott and Russell. I looked after that for the police services. The downloading occurred in 1998. The shortfall was \$10.3 million. In total, the municipality of Prescott and Russell had a shortfall of \$21 million that was caused by the previous government, and today they are going to tell us, "Don't do that." What are they going to do? I'm happy that they are not in government at the present time, because all they are looking for—everybody has to remember here that when there is a tax reduction, there is a service reduction, and we need more money all the time in health services; we need more money in social housing; we need more money for roads. How would the municipality be able to fix all those needy places?

Social housing: The Premier said we have to take care of low-income families. We came up, not too long ago, with \$100 million just to fix those social housing units. You might say it's not enough. It's better than nothing. In Prescott and Russell we got \$381,000. Let me tell you the benefits of the announcements of a good administrative government, what they have done lately.

Just in my area, my area alone, in the MIII, Casselman got \$450,000; the Champlain municipality, \$324,000; Clarence-Rockland, \$750,000; East Hawkesbury, \$495,000. I have to read a quote here that was given by the mayor of East Hawkesbury. He was talking about me when I made the announcement. They called me "the



banker" when I came. They said, "The McGuinty government becomes a banker"—en français it's *Le Banquier*, a program on television—Deal or No Deal. And, really, it made all the news down our way. They are so pleased, every single municipality—I have 10 of them in my riding—about the actions taken by the McGuinty government, you could rest assured that if there was an election tomorrow, don't even think of putting a candidate against us down there. You would spend the money for nothing, because the money they got, \$60 million, which I announced a week ago last Friday—they couldn't believe it. The guy says, "You are like Barry Bonds in our town. You hit a home run every time you come," and every time the McGuinty government is announcing something. He stood up and said, "I'm lucky I've got cowboy boots here, otherwise I wouldn't be able to stand up." So the people were very pleased.

In North Glengarry, we knew that the roof of the arena—as a matter of fact, they are in the final for the Junior B championship, and they have a good hockey team over there. They got \$595,000 to fix their roof.

In the municipality of Russell, they need a new fire hall. It's an old building. We gave them \$750,000. The Nation Municipality asked me, "Jean-Marc, do you have any"—they say in French "*une rancune*"? The mayor over there ran against me in the last election. You know what we gave them? Over \$2 million.

I am there to serve the people. The McGuinty government doesn't look at the colour; they look at what the needs are for the community. And that's what we did.

Stormont-Dundas-South Glengarry: They had to fix the main road, Highway 34, right in Alexandria. They got \$3.5 million.

This is just to show you that the McGuinty government has done something very, very good for all the people, in the rural sectors, especially, but for the whole province, and they should know that.

When I look at what this former government did for businesses in Ontario, why was it that in the Parry Sound area, where they used to have the Minister of Finance—that was the Minister of Finance's riding, in Parry Sound. The business value taxes there, for a \$500,000 assessment on a building, were \$4,700. But why, in Stormont-Dundas-South Glengarry, was it \$16,969? The McGuinty government is going to fix that up. Everybody should be paying the same price for the commercial tax or the business tax.

In Prescott and Russell, for example, we are paying \$15,315 per \$500,000 assessment. Why is that? Why is it in Barrie that they pay \$12,430?

I'm looking at the 2000 provincial figure. It hasn't changed much. But the McGuinty government says, "We want to be fair with every business in Ontario. We want to create jobs." This is exactly what the McGuinty government is doing right now. They want to look at the future. We don't want to wait like they did south of here. We know that they're talking about a recession over there. We're not talking about a recession because we're taking every step possible so that the GDP will continue

to be favourable, and it's with the McGuinty government that we can do it.

That's what it is. I want to thank you very much for listening to what I have to say.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson):** Questions or comments?

**Mr. Ted Chudleigh:** The member talks about Bill 35 as if it's going to be a great saviour of Ontario. I say again: This bill is slush fund heaven. It is going to legalize slush funds. It's going to allow the government to hand out taxpayers' money without taking due account of where that money is going to go, without ensuring that there is a long-term program associated with that money, without ensuring that the money is going to be well spent in the areas of which taxpayers of Ontario want that money to be spent: on projects that are important to the taxpayers of Ontario, projects like health care issues, universities, colleges, school boards—those areas that make Ontario the great province that it is today.

This money is going to go to the four corners of the province in a willy-nilly manner without due process, and without the careful adjudication of ensuring the money is well spent in the best possible way. I think that's a shame.

We saw the money in the federal arena that the Liberal government under Paul Martin, when he was Prime Minister—we saw that money flow out the door, hundreds of millions of dollars going to the Adscam process, which was kind of like a slush fund. We saw under the McGuinty government, about a year ago today, as was pointed out by my friend from Niagara during his comments in the House, that that money flowed out without due process—\$1 million going to the Toronto cricket club.

This money is just the legalization of a slush fund, and it creates a slush fund heaven. I think it's a sad day for Ontario.

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**Mr. Lou Rinaldi:** Let me tell you, it was interesting to listen to my colleague from Glengarry-Prescott-Russell in his vigour in the good work he does for the people in his riding. He's certainly committed.

I made some comments the other night when we were debating our budget, and they're worth repeating.

But before I do that, it irks me a little bit when I hear the members from the opposition, when they, too, benefited. Their municipalities and their communities benefited from this past budget. I just have no idea how they can go back to their ridings and face those folks, especially if those folks are watching us here tonight. Obviously, there is a disconnect, and that disconnect showed on October 10. They just don't get it. They're carrying on down that same path.

In the riding of Northumberland-Quinte West, I have the pleasure to have eight municipalities and one county. I visit those municipalities on a regular basis to meet with the mayors and council, and we've been able to remove the word "downloading" from their dictionary. I was there during the downloading days when it became a



common household word. Today, our government gets praise for the uploading.

*Interjection.*

**Mr. Lou Rinaldi:** You just need to look at the results from October 10—the biggest margin in my riding ever.

All I'm saying is, I just want to encourage my good friends opposite—

**Mr. Peter Kormos:** You should be thanking John Tory.

**Mr. Lou Rinaldi:** John who?

So, I just wish they would understand—

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson):** Thank you. Further questions?

**Mr. Ernie Hardeman:** I want to commend the member from Glengarry–Prescott–Russell for his presentation. I just wished it was somewhat related to Bill 35, because obviously he was talking about things that are not in Bill 35. There is nothing in the bill that says that any funding is going to municipalities. In fact, the word “municipality” is not mentioned in Bill 35, nor any amounts that they might give them. It speaks about some money they may have left over and that the minister can then make up his mind to spend it. What this bill really does is, it changes the fact that they no longer have to have their slush fund completed by the end of the year. In fact, they can move it on into mid-next year in order to spend the slush money and give it to whomever they deem appropriate. It may or it may not be the municipalities.

I expect, if past experience is an example, that in the year when there is no surplus, that will likely be the municipalities' turn, and that year they're going to give what isn't there to municipalities, and then in the years where there is some money, because their budgeting was done wrong and they have more money left over than they had figured on, that they will, as was mentioned earlier by the member from Halton, activate their political slush fund and give it to the areas that the minister deems are the most expedient places to spend government money for political purposes—and I think that's the main thing that's wrong with this bill.

I think if the member from Glengarry–Prescott–Russell had looked at that part of the bill and saw the concern that would be there from an observant reading, he would be concerned about that and he would tell his municipalities that this is not a good way to fund their needs.

What we need is budgeted money for municipalities to help with infrastructure, not the hope of someday getting—

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson):** Thank you. We have room for one more question and/or comment.

**Mr. Frank Klees:** I'll have some more to say about this bill, but I did want to respond to the member from Glengarry–Prescott–Russell, because what I found interesting was that during the entire time of his speech, which should have been related to Bill 35, what he waxed eloquent about were the multi-millions of dollars that he, as an MPP, was able to deliver to the several muni-

cipalities within his riding, but not one red cent of the money that he delivered had anything to do with Bill 35.

*Interjection:* None?

**Mr. Frank Klees:** Not one red cent. The fact that he stands in this House and boasts about the fact that he's referred to as “the banker” in his riding is something that I would not want to be called, because, you see, what he is admitting is that this government, the McGuinty government, has learned the art of buying the vote. They've learned the art of how to manipulate the—

*Interjections.*

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson):** Order, order, order. I would just ask the honourable member if he'd want to reconsider his language there. That's pretty strong.

**Mr. Frank Klees:** I'll certainly reconsider it, Speaker. Thank you.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson):** Would you like to withdraw?

**Mr. Frank Klees:** Withdraw.

What this government has learned is the art of using the people's own money to convince them that somehow, because they've received their own money back, they owe this government something and they should demonstrate that gratitude by electing them in—

**Mr. Peter Kormos:** You mean they were buying votes?

**Mr. Frank Klees:** I would never say that. I would never say that. I would never accuse this government of buying votes. I withdrew that comment.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson):** Thank you. The member for Glengarry–Prescott–Russell has up to two minutes to respond.

**Mr. Jean-Marc Lalonde:** Really, it's interesting to hear the comments from across the chamber. Let me tell you that the numbers that I have given, I could go on and on, because there are quite a few municipalities from his own riding, from the Oxford riding; there were 243 municipalities that got money. I said very clearly that if this bill would have been in place two years ago or right after you people proceeded with the downloading—they couldn't have transferred the money, because you ended up with a \$5.6-billion deficit that we had to take over. But since then, with a good administrative government, we were able to finish with a surplus, and this is the money that we distributed to all the municipalities that—

*Interjection.*

**Mr. Jean-Marc Lalonde:** No. I have to say that there were 262 municipalities that applied, and 243 got some money. So you can rest assured—

**Mr. Ernie Hardeman:** It wasn't my application.

**Mr. Jean-Marc Lalonde:** What's his riding? The member from Oxford was very clear, and he understands. I sat on the other side before and I know why they're criticizing. They are afraid that the people of Ontario recognize that the administration of the McGuinty government is the best one we've seen for years.

*Interjection:* I don't think so.



**Mr. Jean-Marc Lalonde:** They know that, but they won't tell anyone.

**Mr. Mike Colle:** No downloading.

**Mr. Jean-Marc Lalonde:** No downloading. We are uploading what you people have done in the past.

**Mr. Mike Colle:** We're cleaning up the mess.

**Mr. Jean-Marc Lalonde:** We are cleaning up the mess. This is what I call a good government, and you people must be shy of what we are doing.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson):** Further debate?

**Mr. Frank Klees:** I will attempt to focus my remarks on Bill 35.

I'd like to start by pointing out that the day on which the Minister of Finance announced Bill 35 in this Legislature, we had in the galleries representatives from municipalities. I believe Mayor McCallion was here. The representative from the Association of Municipalities of Ontario was in the gallery. There was great applause for the minister's announcement that when this government achieves an \$800-million surplus, then the first \$600 million would go to pay down debt and anything above that would go to infrastructure funding to municipalities. Mayor McCallion took him at his word. She believed the Minister of Finance.

1640

It must have shocked her just 10 days later when he brought down the budget—which, by the way, we all know was already printed the day he announced Bill 35. He knew full well that the surplus would only be \$600 million, not \$800 million, and he knew at the time that what he was announcing would mean zero to Hazel McCallion and the municipality of Mississauga, that it would mean zero dollars to any other municipality in Ontario. He knew it, and yet he had the audacity to stand up in this place and offer up for municipalities, with great disrespect, I would say, something that he knew would mean nothing to those municipalities the minute he brought down the budget that was already printed and was about to be delivered.

That is the underlying basis on which this government that the member for Glengarry–Prescott–Russell speaks about with such eloquence and applauds—the credibility of this government is declining in a tailspin with every pronouncement by this government.

Bill 35 states in its title, “Investing in Ontario Act, 2008.” When we ask the Minister of Finance, as a result of Bill 35, how much is being invested in the province of Ontario as we speak, if he were truthful, as I'm sure he would be, his response would be “Zero.” There isn't a member of this House who would stand in their place—I welcome them, in questions and comments, after I speak; I challenge members from the Liberal Party to stand up and tell me how much is being invested in this province today or over the next number of months as a result of Bill 35. They will have to admit that it is zero.

The responsibility of government is to be stewards of the taxpayers' dollars. That's the fiduciary responsibility that we have in this place. The Minister of Finance has a

responsibility to administer the taxes that the people of this province pay and send in to the government in good faith.

Here's something that is being missed. I point out a question that I asked of the Premier in this place on December 6 this past year. I asked the Premier about the \$200 million that were lost as a result of the province of Ontario investing in asset-backed commercial paper. By making that investment in essentially junk investments, the province of Ontario lost some \$200 million of taxpayers' money. The Premier minimized that. The Minister of Finance stood up and said, “Well, it's not a big deal,” that others have lost much more than \$200 million, and, “We'll survive.”

I challenged the Minister of Finance that he should be holding to account those individuals in the Ontario Financing Authority who made the decision to invest Ontario taxpayers' dollars in essentially junk investments, high-risk investments, because surely we don't have to put our money and taxpayers' money into high-risk investments. In fact, they have a responsibility not to do that. Nevertheless, they minimized it.

Now, let's fast-forward to today, keeping in mind that the province of Ontario, through the Ontario Financing Authority, made some risky investments and lost \$200 million last year. If that \$200 million had not been wasted by the Ontario Financing Authority, what would the surplus have been that the Minister of Finance would have reported to the House when he tabled his budget? It would have been \$200 million more. He would have hit the benchmark of \$800 million, and the result would have been at least another \$200 million to municipalities across the province.

So the fact that there was mismanagement on the part of this government—a lack of responsibility on the part of the Minister of Finance to hold people accountable for how they do the business of government. Now we have his own Bill 35 of non-effect. There was \$200 million lost by the Ontario Financing Authority. He walked into this place with a \$600-million surplus, and, by the way, Hazel McCallion, you get zero. Now, what did Hazel McCallion say in the media? She said that this is wonderful and what they will now be able to do is go back to their own books at the city of Mississauga and they'll be able to reassess as to whether or not they have to charge the 5% of additional taxes to the taxpayers of Mississauga. She left here, no doubt reporting back to her own council the great news that perhaps they won't have to add that surcharge to their tax rolls because of the McGuinty government's gift to them that afternoon. The gift is zero. The gift was short-lived.

**Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne:** What about infrastructure? You really have a great sense of humour, Frank.

**Mr. Frank Klees:** I'm looking at the Minister of Education, who must be terribly embarrassed by what we're debating here today. She knows full well, if she were the Minister of Finance, she would never, ever have attempted to pull the wool over taxpayers' eyes the way the Minister of Finance did. So rather than bringing into this



House a bill that we're now debating—we're taking important legislative time—that means nothing, has no benefit to the taxpayers of Ontario—but I'll tell you who it will benefit down the road.

**Interjection:** Friends of the Liberal Party.

**Mr. Frank Klees:** It will benefit people like the member from Glengarry–Prescott–Russell, who will in fact be able to dig even further into the slush fund that's being created by Bill 35 and bring more of the spoils back to his riding.

Because of what Bill 35 states very clearly—that it's up to the minister to make the decision as to where those funds go—there's no obligation in this legislation to distribute the funds that will be distributed on the basis of any fair formula that makes no difference between a Liberal-held riding and an opposition-held riding. It will be strictly on the basis of, "Where do we need to shift the funds to gain the biggest traction for our Liberal members?"

That's the very kind of politics that the people of Ontario reject. I believe that by the time we get to the next provincial election, they will have had their fill with the kind of politics that is being played with their own tax dollars. This will haunt Mr. McGuinty. This will haunt this Minister of Finance. The Minister of Municipal Affairs will rue the day when he supported this legislation. The Minister of Transportation will regret the day that they allowed this legislation to come forward.

1650

Do you know what it's done? It actually has taken the veil away from the intention of this government to use taxpayers' dollars in a way they were never intended to be used. No one minds paying taxes as long as we can be assured that those funds are going to be used fairly, they're going to be used prudently and they will be put into areas of priority as is determined in an objective and unbiased way. But what they don't want to see is a repeat of the kind of slush-fund politics that this government played that was so very obvious as we came to the last fiscal year-end.

They haven't learned. There's a minister of this House who was forced to resign because of a lack of transparency in how taxpayers' dollars were being transferred throughout the province. This government has not learned. In fact, what they're doing now is giving the Minister of Finance licence to do exactly the same thing, only they're legitimizing it by legislation.

It's a sad day for the province of Ontario. This is not the way you build credibility with taxpayers. It's not the way that you convince taxpayers that you are prudent in terms of how you manage the affairs of this province.

Bill 35 will be passed. The official opposition will vote against it for the very reason that I have just stated, because all it does is legitimize the illegitimate use of taxpayers' dollars. Instead of being transparent and instead of Investing in Ontario, what the title should say is "investing in Liberal ridings" or "advancing the chances of Liberal candidates in certain ridings in the province of Ontario." The longer title would be "giving

the Minister of Finance the authority to direct funds, taxpayers' dollars, into ridings where we believe it can do the best political good." Now that's the long title of this legislation if, in fact, the government wanted to be transparent about what it intends to do.

What this government should be doing is putting forward a comprehensive, long-term plan for infrastructure in this province. We have yet to see that. We have one-time announcements. We're going to see much more of these one-time announcements.

For example, I have here five letters. Yes, they went to municipality of Newmarket, the municipality of Aurora and the region of York announcing, one-time funding, one-time funding, one-time funding. What they're asking the municipality to do is, "By the way, we want you to pass a bylaw, a resolution, that you accept these funds." So these were not funds that were transferred from the province of Ontario to municipalities because of identified needs for infrastructure projects that had been developed over time, that the municipality can then appropriately, in a reasonable and planned way, apply to their infrastructure projects. No, they were one-time announcements, last-minute, year-end announcements that the government then can use in its dog-and-pony-show type of press conferences to make the big splash and to be seen to be delivering some benefit.

While municipal politicians will never turn down any grant that is transferred from any level of government, here is what they're telling us behind the scenes: They're telling it us they see through this government's approach. They resent being used by this government.

**Hon. John Wilkinson:** Name names.

**Mr. Frank Klees:** The member across the way says, "Name names." Let me do that. The region of York: I don't have to go far behind the scenes. This is a newspaper article that talks about what York region thinks about the approach of this government.

**Hon. John Wilkinson:** They're not appreciative?

**Mr. Frank Klees:** Well, you're going to find out right now what is being said by Mr. Fisch, the regional chair. He's referring to the Bradford bypass, which is an infrastructure plan that had been identified as a necessity and a priority by the provincial government a number of years ago and has been undergoing environmental assessments; now not even on the infrastructure plans of this government, nowhere to be seen as a priority or a project—lots of letters announcing one-time funding, but nothing about these important plans. Mr. Fisch says as follows: "Long delays in planning for the construction of the bypass have led to increased traffic congestion on arterial roads and a constant overburdening of concessions, side roads and other rural routes that were never designed to handle high volumes of traffic they now must accommodate on a daily basis.

"The route is more of a necessity now than ever and one that can't afford to remain in legislative limbo much longer." He goes on to talk about the fact that what they need is the provincial government to identify these projects, to work with the local levels of government, the



municipal level of government, and to work on a long-term plan so the municipalities can put in place, implement and get on with constructing these infrastructure projects, not just be told to show up for another press conference where yet another amount of money is dribbled out, and the municipalities are basically left with but a few weeks to determine how they are going to be able to use these funds. The major projects are left untouched.

It's irresponsible on the part of this government to treat municipalities this way. When the Minister of Finance made his announcement of Bill 35, he said it was intended to reach out to municipalities as true partners. Well, if that's the way this government is going to treat partners, I can tell you that it's not a very good relationship. More and more, those partners will expect respect, and they're not being given that by this government.

As my colleague has said, the end result of this legislation will be to create for the McGuinty government a slush-fund heaven, and while it may have some very strong appeal at the outset, the collateral damage will be significant.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson):** Questions and/or comments?

**Ms. Cheri DiNovo:** I look forward to speaking at length on this bill, but I'll just quote a couple of lines from the Toronto Star article. It says:

"Duncan's Bill Is Flawed

"A close examination of its contents shows no mention of municipalities or infrastructure. Nor does it set out the threshold or formula for distributing the surplus money."

I challenge the Minister of Education across the way—she's a very able woman—to try to find municipalities or infrastructure in this bill and to highlight them and send them over. But even an able woman like the Minister of Education cannot perform magic.

1700

I look forward to speaking about what this bill is really about. It's been, of course, elucidated well by the member from Newmarket–Aurora: This bill is about slush funds. This is about getting rid of extra money to your friends or somebody. The definition, by the way, in the bill is "eligible recipient" means a person or entity, other than an individual but including a partnership whose members may be individuals, that does not carry on activities for the purpose of gain or profit." I look forward to elucidating all of the recipients of last year's slush fund, and we look forward to seeing who gets money this year.

Again, I'm looking forward to my time.

**Ms. Sophia Aggelonitis:** I also want to thank the member from Newmarket–Aurora for what, I would say, is a very interesting speech. But I also want to ask him two things. I think he forgot two key things. The first thing is, you talked about transparency. Well, why is it that the opposition voted against the Fiscal Accountability and Transparency Act? That's something that I

think we all voted for, except for you guys. I don't know why. Second of all, you're an opposition member who also left this government with a \$5.6-billion deficit—\$5.6 billion.

Let me tell you what the investments are going to be for my community. First, I want to tell you about the \$12 million that has been invested by this government in Hamilton for social services. Second, let me tell you about the \$33 million that's coming to Hamilton for transportation, and also the \$16.5 million that has come to Hamilton for the McMaster-Mohawk bachelor of technology program. Those are just some of the things that are coming to Hamilton.

I appreciate your comments.

**Mr. Jeff Leal:** It's always a pleasure in this House when I get the opportunity to listen to the member from Newmarket–Aurora, a very experienced member who has been here a long time, but he always misses a few key facts.

I remember when we were given the privilege of forming the government in October 2003, and then we found the \$5.6-billion deficit on our hands. It's an interesting backdrop there, and I just wanted to highlight to you that backdrop. They had an economy that was producing a lot of new jobs. They had a 60-cent dollar. But what they did during that period of time, through reckless tax cuts, reduced their fiscal ability to respond to a number of crises that they faced. SARS—and I hear a number of their members say, "That's why we got the \$5.6-billion deficit." But they destroyed their fiscal structure, so they couldn't respond to emergencies as they came up.

The budget that we've just presented is a very prudent one. It makes strategic investments and has us in a balanced position, the third balanced budget in a row that we all take great pride in. We've also made some key end-of-the-year investments to help our municipalities. We're not the government that had the famous Who Does What committee; in fact, while I was at municipal council, we used to refer to that as the who-got-done-in committee, because municipalities in Ontario got done in. They were advised against going down that street by David Crombie, who did a marvellous study. I suggest the opposition should re-read that study, the kinds of things that should be handled by municipalities in order to finance things.

I have a quote here from Cam Jackson. What did the mayor of Burlington say? He said, "We have a priority list and this will allow us to get to some projects. It will allow us to catch up and harmonize regional city projects. This will be less inconvenient for residents" and save our taxpayers money. Where was Cam Jackson? A few years ago, he was across on the benches.

What did the person from the town of Minto say? It's time that we had John Wilkinson Day in Minto on April 25 because he delivered us \$400,000 to meet our infrastructure needs—

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson):** Thank you. Further questions and/or comments?

**Mr. Ernie Hardeman:** I want to thank the member from Oak Ridges—I'm not sure that's the total title, but



anyway—my colleague, who made a recitation on this Bill 35. I thought he did a very good job of sticking to the bill and the impacts of the bill, or the lack thereof, because obviously, the impacts, as they were promoted when the bill was introduced, are far from the impacts that would be felt by municipalities in the future as this bill is in place.

As was mentioned, the intention the minister put forward was to find a way to give stable funding, shall we say, or predictable funding to municipalities. Obviously the bill does nothing of the kind. In fact, it doesn't speak to municipalities and it doesn't speak to stable funding. All it says is, "Every time I make a mistake in my budget and have a large surplus, we will put it in a fund, and I will decide where we are going to spend it. We might consider municipalities because they do fit the wide definition of who might be eligible for funding through this bill."

I think it's very important that the member opposite in his comments mentioned that Mayor Jackson from Burlington said he could do so much, but obviously he left out the part, "with so little," because the bill is going to give Mr. Jackson nothing—nothing, in the end, to do the things he said he could do. What the mayor was talking about was what the minister was purporting to give him. As this member pointed out, that was not forthcoming because at the time the bill was introduced, the Minister of Finance already knew what the surplus was going to be. He knew that would not be enough to trigger municipalities getting money. They were getting nothing, and that is what this bill will give them when it's finished.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson):** Thank you. The member for Newmarket–Aurora has up to two minutes to respond.

**Mr. Frank Klees:** I want to thank my colleagues on both sides of the House who responded to my comments.

I am ever amazed at how easily we sidestep the issues here in this House. We are debating Bill 35. It does not take very long for Liberal members to slip into other discussions. Even the member for Hamilton Mountain, who is relatively new to this place, has learned very quickly to talk about all of the benefits that are coming to her riding, and that is good. But the point is that we're debating Bill 35 here.

Bill 35 is nothing short, as has been proven in the course of this debate, of enabling legislation that gives this government the ability to legitimately deal illegitimately with taxpayers' dollars, to essentially transfer, in slush-fund format, taxpayers' dollars into ridings and to places and entities and whatever the minister may desire. There is nothing further from transparency than what is contained here in this legislation. I cannot see how members of this government can in good conscience stand in their place and even pretend to support this kind of dealing with taxpayers' dollars, at a time when what we need is credibility in government. There is none in this legislation.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson):** Thank you. Further debate? The member for Parkdale–High Park.

**Ms. Cheri DiNovo:** It's a privilege to speak on behalf of the people of Ontario to the slush-fund bill, because that's what it is. I'm going to pick up where the member for Newmarket–Aurora left off.

I want to give kudos, where kudos are due, to some of the comments, particularly to the new member for Hamilton Mountain, who is doing a very good job defending the indefensible. I want to speak about partisanship for a minute, as it relates to the slush-fund bill. For those who are watching at home, all they need to do is to go to their computers, look up Bill 35, read what's in it—it's a very brief bill—and you will very quickly see that what we've been pointing to is absolutely true. There is no mention of municipalities, there is no mention of infrastructure; I read what the beneficiary is described as—basically a non-profit organization.

I'm going to take great pleasure in walking down memory lane and talking about some of the non-profit organizations, the recipients of the last slush fund. Interestingly enough—I stand here in a chupa, in Tibetan dress—none of them were Tibetan. We had 300 Tibetans out on the front lawn of Queen's Park. I doubt very much whether the beneficiaries of this year's slush fund will be Tibetans either. You pretty well have to be a Liberal or have Liberal connections to be a beneficiary. That was made very clear, and I will prove that in a minute.

1710

Again, we've had some rare examples in this House of bravery and courage, where people do vote against the party line, actually vote for what's ethical, move toward what is right, stand up for themselves, aren't whipped, so to speak. I would certainly encourage every backbencher who really takes the time to read Bill 35, who sees what it's about—

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson):** Order. The honourable member for Peterborough.

**Mr. Jeff Leal:** On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I just want to ask—the words "slush" and "slush fund" have been used by the member for Parkdale–High Park. Standing order 23(h) in section VI talks about, "Makes allegations against another member." I'm not sure that that is parliamentary. I would just like to hear your ruling on that, sir, in terms of the debate.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson):** Thank you. I've been present in the House when previous Speakers have ruled that the terminology is parliamentary enough.

**Ms. Cheri DiNovo:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and that's what I'm talking about—a rare non-partisan moment when people make the right call, do the right thing, actually read the bill that they're debating, don't take it as an opportunity to talk about something else, like Tibetans, and actually focus on Bill 35. We're talking about Bill 35, the slush fund bill, and I thank you for allowing me to say that, to share that with those who are watching at home.

The slush fund bill: Where will the money go? Well, unfortunately, it will probably not go to the municipalities. We've already had an indication that there's not going to be a surplus above the magic \$600-million mark



anyway. But, just if there is—of course there's nothing in the bill that says it should go for infrastructure and there's nothing in the bill that says it should go to municipalities—let's look at where the money went last year.

First of all, an Iranian-Canadian Community Centre with multiple Liberal ties got a \$200,000 grant. One director is former policy adviser to Health Minister George Smitherman, who has given patronage appointments to four centre directors. A former director was a Liberal candidate for Richmond Hill in the October 10 provincial election. Another former director is president of the Liberal riding association in Richmond Hill. A current director is a long-time acquaintance of Finance Minister Greg Sorbara and is also chairman of the Liberal re-election effort.

Another of the beneficiaries last year: Chinese Professionals Association of Canada—\$250,000. Remember, none of those grantees under that \$32-million-some-odd slush fund money that went out the door last year filled out an application form. There was no due process of any sort. Anyway, onward: the Chinese Professionals Association—a \$250,000 grant; a former director, Michael Huang, is a policy adviser to the then immigration minister. The Bengali Cultural Society—a \$250,000 grant; a director is a member of the Ontario Liberal Party. Ontario Khalsa Darbar—a \$250,000 grant; several directors are Liberal donors. Inter-Cultural Neighbourhood Social Services of Peel—\$23,000. They held back on that one. The executive director is the common-law partner of Mississauga West MPP Bob Delaney.

I didn't make this stuff up. I'm reading from the *Star*. This is pretty egregious, and I think that those who watch from home will remember back to those incredible announcements, the best of which, of course, was the \$1 million to the cricket club, that had not, again, filled out an application form, had never done anything so prosaic as that. In fact, it asked for \$150,000 in some way, shape or form—we never saw the paperwork, of course—but all of a sudden received a \$1-million cheque in the mail. I mean, wow, it pays to play cricket, I guess.

The very sad reality, though, is not so much who got the money but who didn't get the money, of all the deserving groups out there. They didn't even know there was money to be had, didn't know that they didn't have to fill out an application form, that all they had to do is phone up their friends in the Liberal Party, and hey, a \$1-million cheque is in the mail. So kudos to the cricket club. The *Star* article goes on to say what they did with the money, which they never asked for. They spent about \$360,000 of the grant and put \$500,000 into a five-year guaranteed investment certificate at a bank.

The Iranian-Canadian Community Centre has put its \$200,000 grant in the bank until it can raise money to build a community centre.

If I were a taxpayer watching this, I'd think, "Why didn't they put it in my bank? It's my money." Why didn't they put it in the bank of all of those taxpayers in Ontario who would like to see some of that money—

those hard-working small businesses, those people who are getting hit right now, those people who need housing, all 170,000 households of them? They wouldn't mind instantly being granted some money so that perhaps they could, hey, pay their rent. Or what about those one in eight children who live in poverty? A little bit of that trickle-down effect might have helped them as well.

I suppose the problem is that they didn't understand how things work around here, don't you think? My friend from Oxford nods. People who are watching don't get that by passing Bill 35—and again, look it up on your computers, write to your MPPs. Once you've read it and you've seen what's not in it and what is in it, express your outrage. Express your outrage that at the end of the year this gives carte blanche to the government to give money to whomever it pleases as long as they're non-profit—no application forms again, I gather; this will be the new way of doing things with year-end extra funds—and then check back.

Sometimes it's difficult to remember history, but really this was not so long ago. What came out of that was the resignation of the minister who administered the end-of-year slush fund. This resulted in a cabinet minister resigning over \$32 million-odd last year.

There were some pretty sharp words too from the Auditor General. Let's see, what does he say? "But ... Auditor General Jim McCarter had some questions...."

"We asked the minister"—at that time; he's now resigned—"point blank how did it get to a million dollars?" the straight-talking accountant recalled, noting the group had been unable to spend all the money.

"The minister's response..."—I guess this is what taxpayers should hear too—"I had to make a decision fairly quickly but in my opinion \$150,000 wasn't enough. Cricket is a sport that brings together a number of, basically, ethnic peoples and I felt it was the right decision to make.""

There you go. So now we know how to get \$1 million from this government: You ask for \$150,000, you have members of the Liberal Party on your side working for your organization, and, lo and behold—better odds than the lottery, way better odds than the lottery—you might receive \$1 million in the mail. Again, remember no application form necessary, no due process required; simply a phone call to the right person will do—the member for Oxford nods—at the right time, at the right time of year.

Bill 35 makes it so. This puts into place that missing piece that they didn't have last year. Last year they just doled out the money; this year they decided to bring in a bill to say, "We can dole out the money." This is what this bill accomplishes.

I particularly feel badly for the municipalities across this province—again, other members have alluded to this—that didn't get a copy of the bill in advance, I'm sure, but heard the spin all right and trusted—not a good thing to do sometimes in politics, I'll admit—that their needs would be looked after. After all, that was the spin, that was the announcement that was made, and then they



get the paltry few pages that Bill 35 represents and they see, lo and behold, no mention of municipalities whatsoever.

**Mr. Ted Chudleigh:** Oops.

**Ms. Cheri DiNovo:** Oops; exactly. Remember, these are municipalities that come begging. I talked in this House about the Oliver Twist budget, and certainly municipalities are in that state, begging, "Please, sir, just a little more, sir." They're begging for crumbs from the master's table. No doubt they need it.

It's interesting, looking back, that \$1 million went to a cricket club. Tonight, I'm going to a rally at the Toronto District School Board because we don't have enough money to keep pools open for our children, but we did have \$1 million last year for a cricket club and maybe this year—who knows? It won't go to children's pools or the schools in Toronto, though. That much we can be pretty well assured of. There's not enough money for them, but there's still enough money to be invested—interest-bearing investments from the beneficiaries of last year's slush fund. They've got those funds invested; they're making money on them.

1720

I never heard the finale of that story; I don't think anybody watching did, either. There was some talk about clawing back those funds, then nothing, right? The member from Oxford nods—nothing. Perhaps if we clawed back those funds, I could go to this rally tonight and report, "Do you know what? That extra half a million dollars the cricket club didn't need might keep your pool open for another few months," or, "The extra \$250,000 that's just sitting in the bank might keep your pool open." Those would be the ethical and logical steps to take.

It's too bad the Minister of Education is leaving, because I think the pool issue is a particularly telling one.

It would cost so little to keep the pools in Toronto open, and it could have been accomplished last year, quite frankly, with the slush funds. That was enough to keep all the pools in Toronto open. Isn't that wild? The money they sent out through the door would have kept our children in pools from here on in. If you're listening there—and we're receiving lots of e-mails about the pools—note that, and then ask yourself, "I wonder what's going to be happening once this bill has passed"—because it will be; there's no doubt about that, because they're a majority and they can do what they want despite our protestations—"I wonder what will happen to this year's slush fund."

Will it go to the pools, we ask. Will it go to education? Will it go to poverty reduction? Will it go to housing? Will it go to breaks for small business? Will it go to infrastructure or municipalities?

**Mr. Ernie Hardeman:** I doubt it.

**Ms. Cheri DiNovo:** My friend from Oxford says he doubts it. I somehow doubt it, too, since they're not mentioned by name. I suppose it depends, though. When you look at who got the money last year, it really does depend on political orientation, doesn't it? It's sad when this place is so partisan that one has to say that out loud.

But it really does depend, doesn't it? It absolutely depends on what distance you have from the Premier's office. If you're very close—good luck; if you're very far—not so much.

So, I suggest to those of you who want to keep your pools open that maybe you should offer to become riding presidents in the Liberal Party, and then maybe we'll get some action. What do you think, member from Oxford?

It's fun to stand here, but the downside is that for the real world—the people who are actually watching this debate—out there it's not so much fun. It's not so much fun for the people who could have used that \$32-odd million last year. They would like to see something we haven't seen in the House this session: substantive legislation that would actually address the needs of those who need it most. Wow. Imagine that. That would be something—instead of what passes for legislation, really substantive legislation.

It's wonderful to go to jurisdictions where this happens around the world—where people actually build housing, where they have a line in the budget for housing, where people actually raise things like ODSP rates, where people actually don't claw back federal money called the national child supplement destined for the poorest children in the province, where people actually invest the money they get from the federal government for housing instead of letting it lapse and letting it be rescinded.

It's nice to go to jurisdictions where there's proactivity around things like manufacturing job loss. That would be nice. It would be nice if there were extra money, and we all know how tight money is. It would be nice if there were extra money, if it went to those most in need instead of those most in greed, right? Those most in need, not those most in greed, but unlikely to happen under the McGuinty Liberals.

Based on history—is it Dr. Phil's line?—if you want to know what people are going to do in the future, you look at what they did in the past. What has this government done in the last five years and what are they going to do in the next three? We pretty well get the gist of it, and this Bill 35 solidifies that. It solidifies it; it makes it so. It makes it legitimate to have a year-end slush fund. Well, that's progress, I guess.

One would only ask—

*Interjection.*

**Ms. Cheri DiNovo:** Truly.

One would only ask, this time at least, when the slush fund comes due, that we have what the Auditor General called for, some transparency, so that at least everyone who is a non-profit entity, so defined by the bill, can apply; so that you don't have to join the Liberal Party this time—so you can actually be a member of another political persuasion and get some of the money; so that you see how to apply and where to apply and whom to apply to for the funds. That would be a step forward. That would be what we in the New Democratic Party would call progress.

I would like to put in a couple of early bids for that extra money:



(1) Pools; let's keep the pools open in Toronto. That's better than \$1 million for a cricket club.

(2) If you're going to give it out to groups, racialized minority groups, Tibetans could really use a hand, you know, now that the trade minister seems to be destined to go on this junket to China at the worst possible time and, by going, really add her voice to the voice of one of the most tyrannical governments anywhere and be used as a kind of stooge, might we say, for the Communist Chinese government in their propaganda efforts. Just to alleviate the suffering of the Tibetan people, who are suffering because they haven't heard from relatives and they don't know what's happening back in Tibet, maybe some of the money could go to them.

Of course, there are so many voices out there who could use that money: children, the one in eight who live in poverty; 170,000 households who wait for housing; small businesses that are hurting and will hurt more if there's a downturn, which we predict. There are many people who could use this money. All we ask is a fair shot at it; and

(3) Finally, a fair shot, which is not in this bill, for exactly what the bill purports to do: municipalities and infrastructure.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson):** Questions and/or comments?

**Mr. Jean-Marc Lalonde:** I was listening very closely to what the member for Parkdale–High Park brought to the House here. Let me tell you, when we say that we have to speak on Bill 35, I don't know what she really meant about the pools or any other activities that go on in a community. I want to make sure we get serious about the debate tonight.

People are watching their televisions, and I think they don't know what the debate is at the present time. If I was to tell your whip that at the present time you are against this bill, I believe that he, the member from Timmins–James Bay, would be very disappointed, because from this, what you call a slush fund, he has received over \$20 million. He has received over \$20 million for his riding alone.

When I listened to the member for Newmarket–Aurora, his riding has received over \$3.3 million. If you people don't want it, we will tell your constituents that you don't want that money. I've never forgotten the day the minister came down, from the opposition, and he thought the province of Ontario stopped at Ottawa. I said, "You still have to travel 110 kilometres before you get to the Quebec border." This was when the former government had completely forgotten Prescott and Russell, and the McGuinty government recognized the needs of the area.

1730

**Mr. Ernie Hardeman:** I want to commend the member from Parkdale–High Park for the presentation on Bill 35. In fact, I would point out to the member from Glengarry–Prescott–Russell that if one were to make a measurement of which one of the two—obviously the member from Glengarry–Prescott–Russell spoke earlier.

If he were to measure the two presentations as to the score on who talked to Bill 35 the most, it would be: Glengarry–Prescott–Russell, zero; Parkdale–High Park, 100%, because it was all related to the money that the minister was talking about, what's supposed to be money left over, money that he took from the taxpayers when he shouldn't have and how he was going to spend it.

In the past, he has spent it in slush funds, as we found out last year. This bill makes it so that from now on he can spend it the following year, six months later than the year it was collected in, and still do it in exactly the same way.

There were also some comments made from across the aisle about the name of the bill. In fact, there was some question as to whether the bill was actually the slush fund bill. I believe it is. It's just that the Minister of Finance, who introduced the bill, has a way of describing a slush fund slightly differently than the plain way to do it. The minister described it as An Act to authorize the Minister of Finance to make payments to eligible recipients out of money appropriated by the Legislature. I think that's really how he says that the Minister of Finance should decide on his own, along with, I'm sure, his colleagues in the Liberal government, how the money that was taken from the taxpayers should be spent to the best advantage of the people who are doing the expending.

So I very much commend the presentation because I think we hit the nail right on the head.

**Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne:** It's a pleasure to rise. Bill 35 is a framework; it's permissive legislation that allows some predictability around the way that surpluses will be managed. I think it's highly surprising that the member from Parkdale–High Park would not be able to grasp that. I think when we look at the amount of money we have invested in publicly funded education over the last four years—the member talks about looking at our record: \$4 billion in publicly funded education, with \$360 million alone every year to the Toronto District School Board and, of that, \$5.4 million is directed at sports programming. So in fact the whole tangent that the member went on about the pools and the money that the Toronto District School Board has really bears no relationship to the reality of the situation.

But the most disturbing thing about what the member opposite did was the tone; the sanctimonious cynicism that was absolutely underlying everything she said made it seem as though she really doesn't take what goes on in this House seriously. It's like she's operating in a different plane, on a different reality, because what we do here is that we put legislation before this House that makes government run well. That is our object. That is why Bill 35 is before us: so that municipalities will have an understanding of how surpluses are going to be dealt with. That is why we've invested more than \$4 billion in publicly funded education, including \$360 million a year more for the Toronto District School Board. That's the kind of government we are, and the people who are on the front lines of education and in our municipalities know and respect that.



**Mr. Ted Chudleigh:** It's always amazing to me how much I agree with the NDP. Although we're on different ends of the political spectrum, I certainly respect the member's point of view. It's also interesting that, as the member from Glengarry–Prescott–Russell pointed out, there's a bunch of money going up there. This guy had better get onside, or we'll pull it back. That's called "greasing the wheels." The Minister of Education talks about greasing the wheels and how things can get going. That's exactly what you talked about.

There are some people in the province who aren't influenced by money that flows. They're influenced by what is right and what is wrong. It's called integrity. It's something that is totally lacking in this government today. Fiduciary responsibility is something that the member from Newmarket–Aurora talked about, and fiduciary responsibility is something that you also have no concept of because it goes hand in hand with integrity. When you are handling someone else's money, you have a fiduciary responsibility to ensure that you do what is right with that money. Creating a slush-fund heaven isn't living up to the fiduciary responsibility of a government, and that will come back to haunt you.

The integrity of this government is so lacking that the future of this government is in serious jeopardy because of the road that you are going down and the lack of fiduciary responsibility that you're showing for the hard-earned taxpayers' dollars of this province.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson):** The honourable member from Parkdale–High Park has up to two minutes to respond.

**Ms. Cheri DiNovo:** It's always sad, after an Equal Voice event, when women in this Legislature attack other women here in that particularly partisan way.

Let us talk about what she said, not who she is. She said—the Minister of Education, I'm referring to—that this bill allows flexibility, to quote her. Yes, that's what slush funds do; they allow flexibility. What she didn't say was—the challenge that I gave the Minister of Education was to point out where in this bill infrastructure or municipalities are mentioned. That, she didn't say anything about, and she didn't say anything about last year's \$32-million slush fund. She didn't say anything about that.

It's interesting in this House what's not said, as well as what is said. I'm sure that the people tonight at the rally at the Toronto District School Board will be assuaged by her words that, despite the fact that \$32 million went out the door last year and none of it to school pools, they can rest assured that this government will save the school pools this year and will spend surplus funds on the school pools, which fit very handily into the definition of "recipient" in Bill 35.

Again, those who are listening at home: Read the bill; read the bill and see what's in there and what's not in there for yourself. And then, if you are a non-profit entity, start writing out an application form. Oh, wait; they didn't have those last year, did they? But you never know; you live in hope. You live in hope.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson):** Thank you for your contribution to the debate.

Further debate?

**Mr. Ernie Hardeman:** I am pleased to rise and speak to Bill 35. As I start, I just want to talk about the process of the introduction of the bill and—shall we say?—the inaccuracies of the statements made by the minister to leave an impression with people who would then praise the bill and the contents of the bill when, in the end, that's not what the bill was.

I just want to start off with a couple of quotes from the announcement that the minister made when he spoke about what he was going to do. When he introduced the bill, he said, "If the province were to achieve a surplus in excess of \$800 million, the first \$600 million would be used to reduce the province's accumulated financial deficit, and the remaining amount would be provided to municipalities for capital purposes. This means that municipalities could receive a minimum of \$200 million in additional capital funding...." But when I look at the bill, the word "municipality" is not mentioned; there is no mention of \$800 million, \$600 million, \$200 million or "capital funding." There's no mention of any of that in the bill.

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It goes on: "The proposed bill, which would be called"—and this is before he introduced the bill—"the Investing in Ontario Act, would direct a portion of provincial surpluses to municipalities for infrastructure needs, such as improving roads and bridges, expanding transit and upgrading social housing." Again, that's what he said the bill would be called and that's the only part of that statement that is true, because the rest is not in the bill.

It's pointed out that this is a piece of permissive legislation. Well, it's very permissive, to the point that it allows the minister to do—

**Mr. Ted Chudleigh:** Permissive with taxpayers' dollars.

**Mr. Ernie Hardeman:** Well, it's permissive—yes, exactly—with how we spend the taxpayers' dollars, and it really goes to one person, who gets to make that decision.

In his announcement, he suggested that it was going to go to deal with the problems that exist with municipalities. I just want to speak a little bit about that, because I think municipalities for a number of years have been very actively pursuing the idea that we need more stable, predictable funding for municipalities to help pay for their infrastructure so they can plan ahead. Up to now, we've had nothing in place other than the infrastructure program, which is a lottery program. So everybody keeps applying and spending a lot of money to apply, and then when the time comes, some people get money and some people don't. In fact, in my municipalities I have more people who keep calling my office and saying, "What are the criteria for this program? This was the third time we applied for this, and again we missed it and we didn't get any funding." Other municipalities, for whatever reason,



sent in a similar type of application and they got it the first time. There seem to be no criteria to deal with it; it just seems to be a lottery system as to where the ministers decide this money should go.

But the municipalities wanted something that would be stable and predictable funding so they could plan for the future. They were told that this bill would do that, and in fact it does nothing of the kind. This is really a bill to talk about how we are going to legalize—or institutionalize, I guess, is the right word—the process of slush funding. The government last year did it, and I expect it's been done before, but last year it became an issue. It was found that a lot of money went out with no application, and it went to—what should we say?—mysterious places that people couldn't understand, as was said by a lot of other members who spoke about the bill. The fact was mentioned that the cricket club of Ontario got \$1 million when they only asked for \$150,000.

The auditor said that that was not accountable and that was not transparent, so they obviously shouldn't be doing it—and, incidentally, that they shouldn't do that because of the Fiscal Accountability and Transparency Act. Incidentally, this bill—another wrinkle to it, I suppose—does change that act too, so they can do things that they weren't allowed to do before. The auditor said that they shouldn't do that anymore, so the government introduced this bill so they could carry on and do it. It legalizes what the auditor said was an inappropriate process.

I just want to point out that there's been some discussion about what the bill actually does. I think the people who are listening and—I was going to say “the people in the Legislature who are listening,” but I'm not sure that there are any more than you and I. But I just want to point out that the bill, when it comes out—it's not really part of the bill. It comes in the schedule prior to the title of the bill. It's called an explanatory note. I'll just read it to you, because I think it's rather important. This explains what the intent of the bill is. Obviously, Speaker, you will be aware that the role of the Queen's official opposition is to point out where the government meets their commitments and where they don't, based on the legislation; whether the shortcomings in the bill are being explained by the government, and you will know they don't always do that. They don't always explain where the bill doesn't meet their goal, and I think that's the role of the loyal opposition.

I just want to point out what the explanation of the bill is:

“The Investing in Ontario Act, 2008 authorizes the Minister of Finance to make payments out of money appropriated by the Legislature to certain persons and entities that do not carry on their activities for the purpose of gain or profit.

“The total payments made under the new act in each fiscal year shall not exceed the lesser of,

“(a) the amount appropriated by the Legislature; and

“(b) the amount that would otherwise be the annual surplus for that fiscal year less the prescribed amount, if

any, of that surplus allocated to the reduction of the accumulated deficit.”

I guess I take it back that I should read it to the people of Ontario, because I'm not sure that many of the people in my community understood what I just read. But what I do want to say, and I think the people of Ontario will understand, is that that there was nothing in that explanation that would say there was money going as stable, predictable funding to municipalities. There was no mention of municipalities in that statement. Obviously, this was just the explanation of the bill, not the bill itself.

It goes on to say:

“The Lieutenant Governor in Council is authorized to prescribe by regulation the recipients to whom payments may be made, the purposes for which payments may be made, the method of and basis for calculating the payments, the activities in which the Minister of Finance may engage in furtherance of the purposes of this act and the amount of the surplus, if any, for a fiscal year that must be allocated to the reduction of the province's accumulated deficit.”

That says that the Lieutenant Governor would do it, and you and I would know—but I'm not sure the people of Ontario would know—that that is in fact the cabinet, and the documentation is just signed by the Lieutenant Governor. By regulation they can do that, but what's interesting about that explanation is that that part of it gives the minister total authority, not only as to who gets the money but how much they get and how the minister will decide the allocation formula. So it doesn't even have the requirement, if it was going to municipalities—and there's nothing in here that says it would be. There's nothing in here that says he has to find a fair way, that everyone would get their fair allotment based on some type of criteria.

It says the minister can, by regulation, set any criteria in place that he wishes to set in place, and then we go from there, and he can allocate the money. He can also allocate this at some time after the public accounts. The bill does point out that the surplus money that they're talking about would in fact not be identified until the public accounts are tabled, which is usually somewhere mid-year. By then it is six months past the end of the budget year before the public accounts would be—that would be the first time that the minister would deal with these funds, long after the surplus had been accumulated. At that time, he can then decide whether they're going to get the money.

Remember, it's going to be too late, at that point in time, for the municipalities to be planning what they're going to use that money for in that fiscal year. Obviously, most of the contracts for the infrastructure have been let. In fact, the decision of where the surpluses are going to be—where the money is going to be used in the municipalities—needs to be known sometime, to be fair, around the time that they're doing their budget. These infrastructure projects that the municipalities need to do are not totally funded by the province. In fact, they're primarily funded by the local municipalities, and they



have to do that through their budget process. Obviously, if they don't know at budget time how much money they're going to get, this really doesn't achieve that goal of stable and predictable funding.

Just quickly on the "eligible recipient": I think we've heard some discussions about it. The government—and in his announcement, again going back to that, he speaks to the municipal—would "direct portions of the provincial surplus to municipalities for ... infrastructure needs." That was mentioned from the government side. This is permissive legislation. "Permissive legislation" means that the minister can, by regulation, make some of the decisions to implement the act.

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One of the things one would expect is that, even in this permissive legislation, if the act is being put in place to direct stable, predictable funding to municipalities, the word "municipality" would appear at some point, that that is where the money is being directed. We could have a debate about how much money there would be or where the money would come from, but if it's a municipal funding bill, you would think it would talk about municipalities. But in the definition of the act, "'eligible recipient' means a person or entity, other than an individual but including a partnership whose members may be individuals, that does not carry on activities for the purpose of gain or profit."

It would seem to me that if the intent was to make this a municipal funding bill that they could count on, that definition of eligibility would at the very least include "a municipality." You could then have regulations defining types of municipalities: the upper tier, the lower tier, the large urban, the small urban, the rural municipalities. You could define types of municipalities, but you would think that the direction of the funding would include the word "municipality" in the bill. Obviously, it doesn't do that.

The other part of the bill I just wanted to touch on quickly was:

"2(1) The Minister of Finance may, out of money appropriated"—this is part of the act—"therefor by the Legislature and in accordance with this act and the regulations, make payments in respect of a fiscal year beginning on or after April 1, 2007 to eligible recipients on such terms and conditions as the minister considers advisable." In fact, this allows the minister to carry on with the slush fund as he did in the past. In the bill, there are no conditions, so obviously the minister thought that that was an appropriate way to expend the surplus last year. I've seen no evidence that would suggest that he wasn't going to do it this year. I guess those would be his conditions: "Take the money, and don't send it back if you have more than you need; just put it in the bank and draw interest on it." I think that's very important.

I said that I was going to stick with Bill 35, but at the same time, I think it's important to realize the problem we have. Earlier in my presentation, I mentioned the fact that municipalities need predictable, stable assistance with their infrastructure. This has been an ongoing debate

and has been mentioned by some of the members of the government side. Ten years ago we had a review—and I had the privilege of serving with municipal representatives on that review; at that time, we called it the Who Does What process—to realign municipal services. Ten years later, everyone has agreed that that review and those changes need to be reviewed again because conditions have changed since then. Obviously, the costs of the social services that the municipalities are responsible for have grown much faster than their ability to raise taxes from the property tax base. Generally, that is the only revenue stream that municipalities have. I'd be the first to say that what we need is a stable revenue stream.

The government promised, at an AMO conference a year ago last August—so we're now 20 months or so past that—that they would do a review of the provincial-municipal relationship. They said they would have that review completed in 18 months. At the time, we had some concern that that didn't need to take that long; that review could be completed more expediently. I introduced a resolution in this House—it was passed by the House—that they look at the timeline and shorten that down. That would have directed the ability of government and municipalities to get together and decide if we're going to realign some of those services so it would require less money going from one to the other and more services being looked after by the province.

One of the things that has been brought up many times is that it's hard to accept that social services, such as Ontario Works, should be a responsibility of the property tax base. That's an income distribution program that municipalities suggest should be part of provincial funding, not municipal funding. If it all became provincial funding, then we wouldn't need to be as vigilant about getting extra funding for infrastructure, because they would have a lot more tax room on their present tax base to deal with the hard services if they weren't responsible for so many of the soft services.

One of the things we found was that in almost two years now, we've had a lot of announcements from government of some of the changes they're making, but we have not yet seen any indication, other than a couple of announcements, that it's going to take longer. We've seen no indication of whether they're ever going to finish that review and come back with some recommendations as to how we can fix the problem with the alignment of services between the municipal and provincial governments. I'm hoping they are getting close to the end of that. That would help municipalities to budget for the future and to build and plan for their infrastructure needs, if they didn't have to look after such a large part of social services. I'm hoping they will get that done.

Incidentally, I mentioned a resolution that this House passed. I sent it to all the mayors and the municipal councils of every municipality in the province of Ontario. We got back 150 resolutions from local councils who supported that initiative, who agreed that it did not need to take 18 months to get the job done. Since that time, of course, we have passed that 18 months and we are still, at

this point, no closer to getting that job done than when it started a year ago last August.

I don't think the government is moving on these things as they told us they were going to. That's why I'm convinced at this point that it's quite evident from what's in the bill—incidentally, it was mentioned earlier that the bill is only two and a quarter pages long. It's a very short bill. It says very little except that the minister be authorized to set up a slush fund—well, to set up a fund to spend surpluses six months into the next year, and he gets to decide who gets the money, how much they get and how they qualify to get it. So far, if the track record of the government is any example, that is not the kind of authority that this House should grant the Minister of Finance, because he has not proven with last year's surplus that he is in the position, as the Auditor General said, to have transparency and accountability in dealing with money he has left over at the end of the year.

It's very important that we realize that the budgeting process surpluses are exactly the same mistake as deficits. They're both the miscalculation of either revenues or

expenses, and all of it, if there is a surplus, belongs to the taxpayer. I think that money should be used to pay down the debt, and services, such as funding to municipalities, should be based on budgeted funding, not on making them wait for the lottery or for a surplus that may or may not appear. The government has an obligation to be upfront with municipalities and not tell them they are going to get funding when they know full well that this year there wasn't enough surplus for them to qualify.

I think they should have funding in their budget to fund municipalities at the level that both agreed to, and then I think surpluses should be put to the debt, because that's owed by the people of the province of Ontario, and they—

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson):** I thank the honourable member for his contribution to the debate.

*Second reading debate deemed adjourned.*

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson):** It being 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until next Monday, April 14, at 1:30 p.m.

*The House adjourned at 1759.*



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Scott, Laurie (PC)	Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock	
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Shurman, Peter (PC)	Thornhill	
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<b>Smitherman, Hon. / L'hon. George (L)</b>	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	Deputy Premier, Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / vice-premier ministre, ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
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Tabuns, Peter (ND)	Toronto—Danforth	
<b>Takhar, Hon. / L'hon. Harinder S. (L)</b>	Mississauga—Erindale	Minister of Small Business and Entrepreneurship / ministre des Petites Entreprises et de l'Entrepreneuriat
Van Bommel, Maria (L)	Lambton—Kent—Middlesex	
<b>Watson, Hon. / L'hon. Jim (L)</b>	Ottawa West—Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest—Nepean	Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
<b>Wilkinson, Hon. / L'hon. John (L)</b>	Perth—Wellington	Minister of Research and Innovation / ministre de la Recherche et de l'Innovation
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<b>Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (L)</b>	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Minister of Education / ministre de l'Éducation
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Zimmer, David (L)	Willowdale	

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Khalil Ramal, Laurie Scott, Peter Shurman  
Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch





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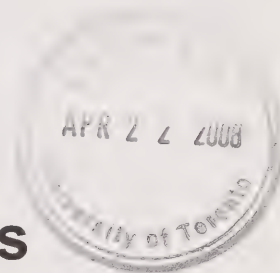
First Session, 39<sup>th</sup> Parliament

**Assemblée législative  
de l'Ontario**

Première session, 39<sup>e</sup> législature

**Official Report  
of Debates  
(Hansard)**

**Journal  
des débats  
(Hansard)**



**Monday 14 April 2008**

**Lundi 14 avril 2008**

Speaker  
Honourable Steve Peters

Président  
L'honorable Steve Peters

Clerk  
Deborah Deller

Greffière  
Deborah Deller



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## LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 14 April 2008

## ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 14 avril 2008

*The House met at 1330.*

*Prayers.*

### MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

#### ONTARIO WINTER YOUTH GAMES

**Mr. Norm Miller:** I'm pleased to announce to the House that the Sport Alliance of Ontario has unanimously chosen the region of Muskoka to host the 2010 Ontario Winter Youth Games.

The Ontario Winter Youth Games are held every two years and bring together athletes, officials, supporters and volunteers. The winter games help the province's amateur athletes sharpen their skills for future national and international events. Not only will the games showcase great competition, but also highlight the outstanding community spirit and exceptional beauty of Muskoka.

This announcement follows on the heels of a very successful inaugural Paralympic Winter Championships in 2006 and the selection of Huntsville and Lake of Bays as the host of the Ironman 70.3 triathlon this year in September.

Muskoka's success in attracting and running sport tourism events is bolstered by thousands of volunteers who give selflessly of their time and energy. To those volunteers, I say thank you.

Muskoka has proven its year-round appeal and versatility once again. I congratulate the Muskoka members of the bid committee on its success. They are Cheryl Kelley of the town of Bracebridge; Kelly Haywood of the town of Huntsville and the Huntsville/Lake of Bays Chamber of Commerce; Jody Somerville of the town of Gravenhurst; Walt Schmid from the township of Muskoka Lakes; Marianne Braid from the Southeast Georgian Bay Chamber of Commerce; and Jennifer Schnier from Lake of Bays.

I invite you all to join me in supporting our young athletes and the Muskoka communities that will host them in the winter of 2010.

#### CANDLELIGHTERS CHILDHOOD CANCER FOUNDATION

**Mr. Yasir Naqvi:** It is my pleasure to rise in the House today to highlight the good work of the Candlelighters childhood cancer support program in my riding of Ottawa Centre.

Each year, approximately 400 children are diagnosed with cancer in Ontario. More than one child per week will be diagnosed with cancer in eastern Ontario, 70 of whom will receive treatment at the Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario.

The Candlelighters organization offers tremendous support to families coping with the daily realities of childhood cancer, while undertaking local activities to promote an awareness of childhood cancer. They provide the simple things that mean a lot to families in need. Whether it be cafeteria vouchers or money for a wig or paying their utilities at home, Candlelighters offers financial assistance to families in crisis.

In addition to financial assistance programs, Candlelighters also offers programs that help families cope with the emotional issues surrounding a cancer diagnosis. The organization provides informal weekly drop-in sessions for parents and caregivers, holds workshops and seminars, and facilitates a support group for bereaved parents.

In the month of September, Candlelighters undertakes to raise awareness about childhood cancer. To that end, I am pleased to be able to support this organization as they work diligently to have the month of September recognized as Childhood Cancer Awareness Month.

I want to extend my sincere compliments to chair Brian Heaney, executive director Jocelyn Lamont, and all the staff and volunteers of the Candlelighters childhood cancer support program in my riding of Ottawa Centre for their commitment and dedication to the community.

#### MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

**Mrs. Christine Elliott:** I appreciate the opportunity to speak on behalf of residents of Durham region who attended a public meeting last Thursday. The meeting, held by the hospital board and the Central East LHIN, was to address public concerns regarding the forthcoming closure of the in-patient mental health unit at Rouge Valley Ajax hospital. Almost 1,000 Durham residents attended this meeting, which went almost an hour over its allotted time. The residents expressed their concern about the consolidation of in-patient mental health beds at Rouge Valley Ajax and Centenary hospitals and the elimination of those beds from the Ajax site.

Residents expressed a number of concerns. One major issue was transportation and the need for someone experiencing a mental health crisis to be seen immediately by a professional team, not one up to 30 kilometres away. Another concern expressed repeatedly at this meeting addressed the issue of the rapidly growing population in



Durham region. It's been reported that Rouge Valley Ajax and Lakeridge Oshawa both run at close to 100% capacity as it stands now. The movement of these beds would place undue stress on the Lakeridge Oshawa location, as those patients aware of the Ajax closure are more likely to access emergency services in Oshawa in order to avoid being sent to Scarborough.

I would like to quote the member for Ajax-Pickering, who said, "This is our hospital. We've worked on it and supported it for 53 years. I can't see a significant amount of savings from moving the mental health beds from one hospital to the other."

I hope that he will continue to express his concerns to the Minister of Health.

### SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

**Mr. Paul Miller:** A group of grandparents in my riding are performing a significant service for their children, grandchildren and their community. They have taken on the responsibility of raising their grandchildren when their own children are incapable of doing so because of drug abuse, mental health or other issues. But, as with so many aspects of our social services in Ontario, they've been running into brick walls when asking the province for appropriate support.

To try to raise awareness of their plight and to provide a place for grandparents to come for help, they have formed an organization called ROCK, which stands for Raising Our Children's Kids.

This group in my riding has been meeting with my staff to find ways of getting the government to provide assistance that the children and grandparents need, particularly when the grandparents are on fixed incomes.

For years, these families were receiving the minimal help of TCA, temporary care assistance, through the Ontario Works program. Since 2006, various municipalities, including Hamilton, have been cutting off these families from TCA support; the Ministry of Community and Social Services and the Social Benefits Tribunal have upheld the decision of the municipalities to do so. The only outcome of this is a severe financial strain on these families, which are already going through enough turmoil.

Through meetings that my staff and ROCK have had with the Hamilton Ontario Works staff, they have come to the conclusion that the Ministry of Community and Social Services needs to make a change to the Ontario Works Act, 1997, to ensure that these care providers receive the full benefits that they need to raise their grandchildren.

In the meantime, the ministry needs to clarify their directives to those municipalities that have cut off the grandparents from temporary care assistance and to ensure that this is available for all grandparents throughout Ontario who are raising their grandchildren.

### PARKINSON'S DISEASE

**Mr. Joe Dickson:** I rise in the House today in support of individuals and families affected by Parkinson's

disease, which was eloquently introduced this past week by the member from Whitby-Oshawa.

This past Friday, April 11, was Dr. James Parkinson day. For everyone in Ontario, it was a day to recognize Dr. Parkinson, who defined the disease, and a day for us to reflect on the challenges that face supportive families and individuals living with Parkinson's. They face hardship every day, and I feel like we owe them much more than one day a year.

1340

Therefore, I'm pleased to acknowledge that today, some very important people involved in this cause are being honoured. Today, the Parkinson Society will be presenting awards to their top volunteers. I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate the 300-plus members of the Durham region chapter of the Parkinson Society for all of their hard work and their volunteers on raising awareness of this devastating disease.

Furthermore, I recently had the opportunity of meeting with Jean Keary, who chairs the Ontario advocacy committee of the Parkinson Society. Jean raises awareness not only through her work with the Parkinson Society but also through supporting her husband, who suffers from Parkinson's. On behalf of Jean, her husband and all of those who are suffering, I urge anyone who has the means to volunteer your time, make a donation and help build a better understanding of Parkinson's disease.

### HUMAN RIGHTS

**Ms. Lisa MacLeod:** We already know that the McGuinty Liberals are silent when it comes to human rights policy in China. Now the McGuinty Liberals are following in China's secrecy footsteps, first with the economic development minister's covert junket to China and second with the secret meeting with the Premier and a Chinese governor. What's next? Are the Liberals going to start silencing protestors at Queen's Park just like they did this morning when members of the Queen's Park press corps showed up to interview the Premier? Unfortunately for comrades McGuinty, Papatello, Duncan and Smitherman—our very own Gang of Four—Ontarians can't be silenced and neither can our press.

Ontarians expect transparency, not closed-door meetings and not secret trips with the regime that is right now being repudiated for its human rights abuses. Will the Premier lift the veil of secrecy? Will he let the world know that Ontarians value human rights, peace and a free press? Will the Premier stand here today and make a statement that human rights do matter in this province? Will he clarify that human rights are not just a federal matter? And when he does, will he condemn human rights abuses in Tibet, in northwestern China with North Korean immigrants and in China and abroad against the Falun Gong, or will he just sit back in secret?

### JEFFREY BUTTLE

**Mr. Wayne Arthurs:** I rise today to commend the achievements of Jeffrey Buttle, Canada's gold medal



winner in last month's World Figure Skating Championships. On Saturday, I had the pleasure of attending a skating gala presented by the Pickering Skating Club in which Jeffrey Buttle performed his brilliant gold medal routine in front of an enthusiastic crowd of admirers from Pickering and Durham region at the vast Pickering Recreation Complex.

It was just recently that I also had the privilege of attending another significant event at that very same complex, an event announcing a new partnership between the Ontario government and the city of Pickering. The Pickering Recreation Complex is recognized across Canada for its award-winning design and program-filled agenda. On this occasion, the province of Ontario, as part of its municipal infrastructure investment initiative, presented the city of Pickering with a grant of \$1 million to expand the Pickering facilities. The expansion of this terrific facility will add to the city's ability to provide further programs for the enjoyment of all who use it, including enhanced fitness facilities and programs.

I would like to once again congratulate Jeffrey Buttle for his outstanding gold medal achievement and for coming to the city of Pickering and allowing its proud residents, including myself, the pleasure of seeing what the world saw when he captured the hearts and minds of skating enthusiasts the world over.

## POVERTY

**Mr. Charles Sousa:** As the famous saying goes, "Those who cannot learn from history are doomed to repeat it." I use it today to distinguish how the McGuinty government chooses to invest in Ontarians rather than follow the steps of the Conservative government's call for drastic and unsustainable tax cuts. These Conservative cuts led to devastating consequences to our social programs and initiatives, and usually hurt lower-income families the most.

One of the most substantial ways that this government is investing in Ontarians is with the development of the Ontario poverty reduction strategy. The cabinet committee on poverty reduction will build the strategy around the Ontario child benefit, with measures and reasonable targets by the end of 2008.

While working to complete this strategy, this government has taken the early steps with investments of \$135 million over three years to provide dental services to low-income Ontarians. We have doubled the funding for student nutrition programs—now \$32 million over three years—which help to provide nutritious meals and snacks to children and youth in Ontario's schools and community settings. This government will also provide a total of \$100 million to all 47 municipal service managers to repair existing housing stock, which will enable repairs for about 4,000 units.

We know there's more work to do to alleviate poverty in Ontario. We acknowledged this with the creation of the cabinet committee and its work on a poverty reduction strategy. But we're not giving up. We will continue

to work with many community organizations and individuals who share our goal of investing in all Ontarians.

## HOSPITAL FUNDING

**Ms. Helena Jaczek:** It's my pleasure to rise in the House today to speak to the recent funding announcement of \$667.2 million for Ontario's hospitals. This funding, which is a 4.9% increase over last year, targets new beds, more surgeries and lower wait times. This means that we will see increased access to hospital services in Ontario's fastest-growing communities. It means continued funding for surgeries and MRI and CT scans as part of Ontario's wait time strategy. This announcement marks the earliest-ever detailed allocation of hospital funding, allowing hospitals and the local health integration networks, or LHINs, to know how much money they can count on for the year.

I am more than pleased to let you know that the Central LHIN, which covers my riding, received a 5.53% increase in funding with this announcement, resulting in over \$973 million in base funding for 2008-09.

This announcement falls in line with what this government is doing to revive Ontario's health care system after nine years of drastic and damaging Conservative cuts and closures. Since 2003, we've increased hospital funding in Ontario from \$10.9 billion to \$14.4 billion in 2008-09. Since 2003, over 100 new hospital projects have been completed or are under way.

Ontarians want their government—

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Thank you.

## INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

### RED TAPE AND REGULATORY REVIEW ACT, 2008

#### LOI DE 2008 SUR LA RÉVISION DES FORMALITÉS ADMINISTRATIVES ET DES DISPOSITIONS RÉGLEMENTAIRES

Mr. Hillier moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 57, An Act to establish political oversight over legislation and regulations to reduce red tape and unjustified regulatory burdens / *Projet de loi 57, Loi établissant un régime de surveillance politique des lois et règlements afin de réduire les formalités administratives et les fardeaux réglementaires injustifiés.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

*First reading agreed to.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** The member for a short statement?

**Mr. Randy Hillier:** It is my pleasure to introduce my very first bill, focused on red tape and regulatory review. For far too long, the nameless have created a red sea of regulations from their ivory towers without scrutiny by



this assembly. This bill empowers all members, from the back row to the front, to remove regulations that provide no value, regulations that infringe upon freedoms and reduce competition.

It is imperative that we in this House do our homework before enacting regulations. It is time to get back to basics—

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Thank you.

## ONTARIO MEDAL FOR CIVILIAN BRAVERY ACT, 2008

### LOI DE 2008 SUR LA MÉDAILLE DE BRAVOURE DES CIVILS DE L'ONTARIO

Mr. Yakabuski moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 58, An Act to create the Ontario Medal for Civilian Bravery / Projet de loi 58, Loi créant la Médaille de bravoure des civils de l'Ontario.

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

*First reading agreed to.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** The member for a short statement?

**Mr. John Yakabuski:** Ontario currently does not have a medal for civilian bravery. The only medal the province has is one for police or firefighters. I believe that's an oversight on the part of the province, and this act would serve to remedy that.

## MOTIONS

### HOUSE SITTINGS

**Hon. Michael Bryant:** I move that, pursuant to standing order 9(c)(i), the House shall meet from 6:45 p.m. to 9:30 p.m. on Monday, April 14, for the purpose of considering government business.

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour will say "aye."

All those opposed will say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

*The division bells rang from 1350 to 1355.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** All those in favour will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

#### Ayes

Aggelonitis, Sophia  
Albanese, Laura  
Baikisssoon, Bas  
Bartolucci, Rick  
Bentley, Christopher  
Bradley, James J.  
Brown, Michael A.

Duguid, Brad  
Fonseca, Peter  
Hoy, Pat  
Jaczek, Helena  
Jeffrey, Linda  
Kular, Kuldeep  
Kwinter, Monte

Phillips, Gerry  
Qaadri, Shafiq  
Ramal, Khalil  
Ramsay, David  
Rinaldi, Lou  
Sandals, Liz  
Sergio, Mario

Bryant, Michael  
Cansfield, Donna H.  
Chan, Michael  
Colle, Mike  
Crozier, Bruce  
Delaney, Bob  
Dhillon, Vic  
Dickson, Joe  
Dombrowsky, Leona

Mangat, Amrit  
Matthews, Deborah  
Mauro, Bill  
McNeely, Phil  
Milloy, John  
Mitchell, Carol  
Moridi, Reza  
Naqvi, Yasir  
Oraziotti, David

Smith, Monique  
Smitherman, George  
Sousa, Charles  
Van Bommel, Maria  
Watson, Jim  
Wilkinson, John  
Wynne, Kathleen O.  
Zimmer, David

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** All those opposed will please rise and be recognized by the Clerk.

#### Nays

Bailey, Robert  
Bisson, Gilles  
DiNovo, Cheri  
Elliott, Christine  
Gélinas, France  
Hardeman, Ernie  
Hillier, Randy  
Horwath, Andrea

Jones, Sylvia  
Klees, Frank  
Kormos, Peter  
MacLeod, Lisa  
Marchese, Rosario  
Miller, Norm  
Miller, Paul  
Munro, Julia

Murdoch, Bill  
Scott, Laurie  
Shurman, Peter  
Tabuns, Peter  
Wilson, Jim  
Witmer, Elizabeth  
Yakabuski, John

**The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller):** The ayes are 47; the nays are 23.

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** I declare the motion carried.

*Agreed to.*

1400

## STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

### VICTIMS OF CRIME

#### VICTIMES D'ACTES CRIMINELS

**Hon. Christopher Bentley:** I rise in the House this week to mark National Victims of Crime Awareness Week. Our first priority is to do whatever we can to prevent people from becoming victims of crime. For those who have suffered from crime, we strive to support them with compassion and respect by building on the efforts of governments past, as well as individuals and organizations, to ensure they have the services they need.

Notre gouvernement offre aux victimes des services de soutien lorsqu'elles en ont le plus besoin, c'est-à-dire tout de suite après la perpétration de l'acte criminel, tout au long du processus de justice criminelle et, par la suite, lorsqu'elles tentent de reconstruire leur vie.

Tout au long de la semaine, je parlerai de la détermination de notre gouvernement à poursuivre les efforts passés en vue d'aider les victimes à se remettre du traumatisme qu'elles ont subi et à se construire une vie solide pour elles-mêmes et pour leur famille.

Our government offers services to support victims when they need help the most, be it in the immediate aftermath of crime, throughout the criminal justice process or as they rebuild their lives. Throughout this week I will be talking about our government's determination to build on our past efforts to help victims recover from



trauma and build stronger lives for themselves and their families.

Today, the McGuinty government is announcing the largest commitment to victim support ever made by an Ontario government. This government is making \$100 million available to the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board to help more than 8,000 victims of violent crime and their families. It ensures that the board, which awards compensation to victims of violent crime, can meet all its current obligations to victims as quickly as the claims can be processed.

The need for additional resources was recognized by the Ombudsman's report on the board last year. Since then, 90% of the Ombudsman's recommendations have been addressed. Last year, we provided the board with an extra \$14.75 million to both compensate victims and hire more adjudicators and staff, modernize its operations and speed up the hearing process. As a result, the board has reduced its caseload by hearing 40% more cases than before, which means that over 1,000 more victims had their cases processed this year compared with last. Now, our \$100-million commitment will ensure that the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board can deal with its outstanding cases and meet victims' needs in a way that is both timely and respectful.

In response to the Ombudsman's report, we also appointed former Chief Justice of Ontario Roy McMurtry to study the role of direct compensation within the array of services now provided to victims of crime. The government is expecting his review later this year.

We've come a long way from where we once were when it comes to supporting the victims of crime. When the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board was first established in 1971, it handled a couple of dozen cases per year. It was one of just a few services available to victims at that time. A lot has changed since the 1970s. Over the years, many new and innovative services supporting victims have been created.

Back then, there were very few sexual assault or rape crisis centres. Now, 39 provincially funded sexual assault/rape crisis centres offering counselling and supports to victims and survivors of sexual abuse offer their services throughout the province of Ontario.

Back then, victims who were also witnesses of crime had little in the way of help to get them through our justice system. Today, more than 41,000 Ontarians benefit from guidance from our victim witness assistance program to make their way through the court system, including special help for child victims and witnesses.

Back then, in the immediate aftermath of a crime, there was little help available, but things have changed. Ontario's victim crisis assistance referral service helped 48,000 victims last year, with immediate on-site service available 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Back then, victims of domestic violence, who are overwhelmingly women, came into contact with a court system that too often set offenders free. We can't return to those days. Our domestic violence court program addresses the complex issues of harm and fear found in

abusive relationships by helping victims and holding offenders to account. Specially trained prosecutors, victim witness staff and police work with victims, community agencies and the court to break the cycle of violence. The goal throughout is to break the cycle of violence by ensuring that those who commit domestic violence are prosecuted. Breaking the cycle of violence is essential to helping women rebuild their lives.

Without commenting directly on them, recent events remind us that from time to time, the law can challenge the best of motive, intention and system. Our determination is to meet the challenge and develop the necessary options that can respect a system of justice founded on the presumption of innocence while providing complainants in crisis with the support they need. Over the next few days, we'll be meeting with representatives of a number of organizations to find these additional options.

Our dedication and determination is clear. It's reflected in the new supports that we've developed. It's reflected in the fact that over the past four years we have invested an additional \$340 million in services to support victims, more than twice the amount of any previous government—

**M. Rosario Marchese:** Encore en français.

**Hon. Christopher Bentley:** —which has found favour, I understand, from members of the third party, specifically the one commenting.

Our major commitment to the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board is just one of the ways our government is marking Victims of Crime Awareness Week. Throughout this week, we will be speaking to other initiatives. We will continue to improve services for victims of crime and their families. We will continue to work to make sure victims receive the help they need as soon as we can reach them. We will continue to work to help keep children safe when they visit parents who need supervision. We will continue the work to address the roots of women abuse, protecting victims and holding abusers accountable. We will continue working with individuals and organizations that support victims. We are all dedicated to ensuring that victims are treated with respect, compassion and sensitivity. Together, we'll seek innovative ways to provide victims with the support they need in the most challenging of situations.

Je sais que tout le monde voudra saisir l'occasion pour remercier ceux et celles qui travaillent d'arrache-pied pour aider les victimes de violence. Ce sont leur dévouement et leur compassion qui aident les victimes, ainsi que le système de justice criminelle, à surmonter les nombreuses situations difficiles qui surgissent.

I want to take this opportunity to thank everyone who has worked so hard to support victims of violence. It's their commitment and compassion that help victims and the criminal justice system, and all those involved in it need commitment and compassion to get through the difficult circumstances that arise. It's with their helping hands, compassionate hearts and much-needed guidance and advice that the real difference is made.



PREMIER'S AWARDS  
FOR TEACHING EXCELLENCE  
PRIX DU PREMIER MINISTRE  
POUR L'EXCELLENCE EN  
ENSEIGNEMENT

**Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne:** We know that across Ontario there are wonderful things happening in our schools. We know that these wonderful things happen because of the hard work and dedication of outstanding principals, teachers, support staff and board staff. It's their caring and individualized attention that inspire students to succeed and motivate them to reach higher. These are the people who keep our schools clean, healthy and safe. They are the individuals who nurture tomorrow's engaged and empathetic citizens. They challenge young minds, open up doors, and help each student learn to the best of his or her ability.

Today I'm very pleased to have the opportunity to recognize some of those exceptional individuals through this year's Premier's Awards for Teaching Excellence.

Ces prix nous donnent l'occasion de remercier quelques-unes des personnes exceptionnelles qui œuvrent dans nos écoles et conseils.

Fourteen individuals and one team of nine from across Ontario are being recognized in six different categories. These categories include Teacher of the Year, New Teacher of the Year, Excellent Support Staff, Excellence in Leadership, Team of the Year and Lifetime Achievement.

Les personnes qui recevront ces prix le méritent certainement.

They are role models, mentors and coaches. They are creative and innovative and demonstrate a real commitment to their professions and to their students.

This year's recipients include teachers who helped students learn by transforming classrooms into an arctic landscape or the Quebec Winter Carnival. They include teachers who took learning outside of the classroom to hike the Niagara Escarpment, explore the battlefields of Europe or cook a meal in a school café.

We're honouring custodians and secretaries whose pride in their work and caring natures have inspired staff and students. We're celebrating a team of education assistants who are helping some of the schools' most exceptional students reach their full potential in all aspects of their lives. We're also recognizing leaders who empower staff and students and who have made a tremendous difference in advancing student learning in their communities.

Ces personnes sont aussi des apprenantes et apprenants enthousiastes et des mentors pour d'autres membres du personnel. Nos écoles recèlent d'exemples d'excellence, et ces prix sont une très bonne occasion de souligner une partie de cette excellence.

I also want to say a special thank you to everyone who took time to nominate someone in their school community.

Le nombre et la qualité des candidatures que nous avons reçues de nouveau cette année témoignent vrai-

ment du calibre des personnes qui travaillent dans nos écoles et conseils.

I would like to offer my most sincere congratulations and thanks to this year's recipients. I'm looking forward to personally congratulating them at a special recognition ceremony during Education Week.

1410

## UNIVERSITY FUNDING

**Hon. John Milloy:** Last Friday, along with my colleagues the members from London North Centre, London West and London-Fanshawe, I announced an important new investment by our government in Ontario's universities.

As part of our government's \$1.5-billion, three-year investment in post-secondary education and training announced in the 2008 budget, we are providing \$200 million in immediate financial support to universities across Ontario. In fact, to date this year, we have invested more than half a billion dollars in our universities, colleges and training programs.

Our announcement on Friday took place at the University of Western Ontario in their biological and geological sciences building. This facility houses some of Canada's best scientific talent. In this building, some of our brightest students are being trained. These students will be the leading scientific minds of their generation. That is what we are investing in today and that is in whom businesses will invest in tomorrow.

This new funding will help universities upgrade and renovate facilities and will provide a better learning environment for students. It will pay for things like new equipment, improvements to security systems, energy efficiency upgrades and accessibility projects.

These investments, coupled with \$200 million for university and college campus improvements provided in January, represent an important step forward for our students and an important step in building a better Ontario for everyone.

Our government does not believe that cutting services to support unwise tax cuts is the way to ensure a strong future for this province. We believe in investing in the people of Ontario. We believe in building a knowledge economy that will be the envy of the world. We believe that businesses want to invest in markets with a strong, well-educated, highly skilled workforce. And that is what our investments in training, colleges and universities are all about.

Our government's plan for post-secondary education is one with vision and one focused on helping individual Ontarians reach their full potential: \$6.2 billion in spending by 2010 through our Reaching Higher plan is already helping people across this province work toward their dreams and build a strong future for themselves.

By investing in our people, investing in our students, we are all building an Ontario strongly positioned to excel in the global economy. Ontario's strength is in our ingenuity and the drive to succeed that we all share.



The money we are investing in university campuses will have an immediate impact in communities across Ontario, creating about 2,000 construction jobs. It will ensure a strong learning environment for our students and it will help turn Ontario into a true knowledge economy able to compete globally.

Our government believes in the people of Ontario. Our investments in post-secondary education are designed to help each student unlock their true potential and achieve their dreams.

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Responses?

### VICTIMS OF CRIME

**Mrs. Christine Elliott:** I'm pleased to rise today to respond on behalf of the Progressive Conservative caucus to the statement made by the Attorney General regarding National Victims of Crime Awareness Week. This is an extremely important topic and something that we in the Progressive Conservative Party take extremely seriously. I would like to note just for the record that during our mandate we were responsible for the Domestic Violence Protection Act, the Victims' Bill of Rights, the victims' justice action plan and the Office for Victims of Crime.

Let's take a look at the record of this government—not such a good track record in this respect, because the Office for Victims of Crime has been reduced to just an answering machine, virtually, not really doing anything to help the people of Ontario. The Criminal Injuries Compensation Board had to be the subject of an Ombudsman's report because the work of this board had virtually ground to a halt because of underfunding and understaffing, to the point that the Ombudsman noted in February 2007 that immediate action needed to be taken with respect to this matter.

Some money was dedicated to that, admittedly, last year; \$100 million today over two to three years, but I guess that's because you have to make some kind of an announcement and throw more money at it if you don't really have any other kind of plan, especially when you consider that Chief Justice McMurtry—a great choice, by the way—has not even reported on the role of direct compensation within the array of services now provided to victims of crime.

I would say that it's great to have more money; it's more important to have a plan. We need to have a dedicated plan to deal with the very important services provided by witnesses to crimes and also support the very vulnerable people who are victims of crime. I would say that it's great to throw money at it, but what exactly are you going to do, and how exactly are you going to help people without having the full picture, without having Mr. Justice McMurtry's report?

### UNIVERSITY FUNDING

**Mr. Jim Wilson:** In response to the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities: It just irks me that the Liberal ministers continue on this mantra that tax cuts

somehow mean less money for government. We proved during the PCs' time in government for eight years that revenues went up every year as we lowered taxes and employed over one million net new jobs in the province of Ontario. Your best income is income taxes from working people, not 200,000 good manufacturing jobs lost in the last two years in this province.

Once again the government, without a long-term plan for infrastructure and universities, is dropping money, and students have been asking for years for their classrooms to be fixed up. But I say again to the minister this week, as I've said in each of the last three weeks, that there's no use throwing more money at the buildings if you don't hire the 5,500 new professors needed just to keep up with the increased enrolment in our universities.

The Ontario Confederation of University Faculty Associations has tried to get into your office. I don't know if they've had a meeting yet, but they've been trying for four months. You would think you would meet with the professors in universities in your first four days in office, but they've been waiting and waiting for months. That's complete arrogance on behalf of the Liberal government, and shame on you. You don't want to hear from the people who are teaching university students because you know that even after all of your announcements since your re-election, we're still dead last—10th out of 10—with respect to the student-faculty ratio in Canada and dead last in per student funding.

Dalton McGuinty in 1999 not only made a promise, but he signed a pledge as opposition leader that he would bring student funding per capita up to the national average in his first term in office. Well, your first term has passed. It's now four and a half years since you've been in office and we're still 10th out of 10, the laughingstock of Canada when it comes to funding our universities. You throw a little money for books and a little money for travel. You need to get tuitions in line and you need to get your funding up. Again, there's no sense building classrooms if you don't have any professors to put in them.

### PREMIER'S AWARDS FOR TEACHING EXCELLENCE

**Mr. Jim Wilson:** Just in the last minute I have, on behalf of John Tory and the Progressive Conservative caucus, I want to respond to the education minister and say that, yes, we too appreciate our teachers. Many teachers in my life, like June Merkly, Theresa Keogh, John Bertram and Mary Brett, had a profound impact on my life, and I know we can all name our teachers who had an impact on our lives.

Congratulations to those who were nominated. Congratulations to those front-line teachers who inspire our young people, who bring out their creativity, who help them to be the best they can be. I congratulate the Minister of Education for that program. It is one that the Liberals brought in and it's a good program. All the best to our teachers, and may you keep up the good work.



## VICTIMS OF CRIME

**Mr. Peter Kormos:** Do you wonder if anybody out there—anybody—believes anything the Attorney General has to say when it comes to this government and victims? This government talks about treating victims with compassion and respect. Tell that to Noellee Mowatt, who, after getting a beating hung on her, called the cops and ended up getting tossed in jail. She did 10 days of time. That's the equivalent—think about it—to a 30-day sentence for being victim of a crime.

The Attorney General stands up and talks about support for victims in the immediate aftermath of the crime, throughout the criminal justice process. In the 10 days that this young, 19-year-old pregnant woman spent cooling her heels at the Vanier Centre, not one person from the crown attorney's office came to see her, not one cop came to see her and not one victim support person came to see her. This government should be ashamed—ashamed—of itself for victimizing the victim and turning its back on the victim.

By God, talk to Julie Craven and her dad. They're the mother and granddad of Jared Osidacz, murdered, but being denied the dignity of a stand-alone coroner's inquest and not being given access to the provisions of Jared's law.

That's the kind of absence and delinquency this government has when it comes to victims of serious crime. The witness protection program in the province of Ontario more often than not consists of a bus ticket to Belleville and a gift certificate to McDonald's. It is virtually non-existent, and it's more notable in its failures than in any of its successes. You inherited a Victims' Bill of Rights that the courts of this province told you wasn't worth the paper it was written on, yet victims still have to work with that fragile bit of nothing under your regime, hoping against hope that a non-existent victims' rights office will have any resources for them whatsoever.

You've got nothing to brag about when it comes to supporting victims, Attorney General. This government should be ashamed of itself. It should hang its head in shame.

1420

## PREMIER'S AWARDS FOR TEACHING EXCELLENCE

**Mr. Rosario Marchese:** I would like to congratulate all the teachers and support staff who are receiving these awards for the fine work they do, often against enormous odds. I think of the custodians, secretaries and educational assistants who for the last 12 years have been doing a lot of work with fewer numbers every year. We're shifting a whole lot of work onto these support staff—the minister denies this—yet that is the reality of the school, and we honour them. Why? Because they're doing double shift for one salary.

We honour teachers who are no longer just educators, because we know today that they're surrogate parents,

social workers, psychologists, police officers, mentors and mediators. Yet when they have other social issues to deal with, such as poverty issues, they have to deal with that as educators. There is no extra support to the teacher to do her or his job as an educator. But there are a lot of poverty questions that impinge on education, and we give them so very little support.

How many times do teachers have to deal with kids who have issues of mental health? Do they get the support that they so desperately need in that classroom? No, they don't. How many times, when students have problems in their families—there is substance abuse of whatever kind and they bring that into the school system, do the teachers get the support they desperately need to educate, to teach? We say no, they don't. Would that they get the support to be able to do the job they do.

So yes, I honour them today, as the minister is doing. And yes, I honour the support staff, as she's doing today, because they do a whole lot of work with often so very little support from our governments.

## UNIVERSITY FUNDING

**Mr. Rosario Marchese:** With respect to the statement from the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities: Often they announce infrastructure monies at the end of the year, where they have a sense of, "What do we have left?" And they throw it out the door to be able to balance their budgets. Is that planning? Is that how we do planning for infrastructure? That is the way the government does it. That is not the way it should be. But money is given for infrastructure at the end of the year once they realize how much money they have, and here's what goes out the door.

When we look at what Paul Genest, president of the Council of Ontario Universities, said—he told a legislative pre-budget committee that "universities need ... \$1.6 billion to improve existing labs, libraries and classrooms.

"University buildings are getting older and coming under pressure from the ballooning number of students, he said."

And what do we get? When I analyze the \$1 billion that's supposedly going out the door, when we analyze line by line, they're only getting \$45 million this year. That's not a whole lot to deal with—

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Thank you.

## VISITORS

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** There are a few guests to Queen's Park today that we'd like to introduce.

On behalf of the member for Oak Ridges–Markham: A class will be visiting Queen's Park today—Pierre Elliott Trudeau High School, a grade 10 class.

On behalf of the member for York West: the fifth-grade class from St. Simon elementary school and Ms. Mini, their teacher. We hope they enjoy their tours of Queen's Park today.



On behalf of the member for Nipissing, we'd like to welcome Sharon Walker and Becky Walker in the east members' gallery. Becky's a student at Brock and Sharon is a founding member of the paddle program in North Bay. Welcome to Queen's Park today.

On behalf of the member for Hamilton Mountain, we would like to welcome Jennifer and Eric Fedes, the mother and the brother of page Kelsey, in the east members' gallery today.

On behalf of the member for Brant, we welcome Roz Rickettes and Sandy Wheller, who are participating in a charity lunch and are seated in the east members' gallery.

On behalf of the member for Thunder Bay—Atikokan: Dr. Tom Puk, a professor from the faculty of education, teaching ecological literacy, in the east members' gallery. Welcome today, sir.

On behalf of the Minister of Labour, we welcome to the Legislature today a group of new Ministry of Labour managers participating in a training session. Welcome to Queen's Park.

On behalf of page Adam Laskaris, his grandparents were here for a visit today, and we would like to have welcomed Robert and June Defries to the Legislature today.

On behalf of the member for Simcoe—Grey, welcome to the parents and grandparents and siblings of page Alex Ballagh: Dr. Robert Ballagh and Margot Ballagh; his grandparents John and Joan Douglas; and Joyce Ballagh and brother Cameron in the west members' gallery. Welcome to Queen's Park today.

On behalf of the member for Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock and the member for Leeds—Grenville, we'd like to welcome the grandmother and mother of page Lucas Bongers, Mary Hall and Christine Bongers, in the west members' gallery. Welcome today to Queen's Park.

#### PREMIER'S COMMENTS

**Hon. Dalton McGuinty:** On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: On Wednesday last, you called to order the member for Halton on the basis of something that he had said. You asked him to withdraw that, and he did. In fairness to the member for Halton, in fairness to this House, I said something at the outset of that question period very similar to what the member from Halton said, and I think I should withdraw that here and now as well.

#### ORAL QUESTIONS

##### HUMAN RIGHTS

**Mr. Robert W. Runciman:** My question is for the Premier. It seems that the controversy raised by the Minister of Economic Development's trip this week to China to cut a ribbon and the negative reaction to her attempts to get away unnoticed have had no impact on the Premier. We've now learned that earlier today the

Premier hosted a luncheon with Chinese officials and business leaders.

Premier, can you tell the House whom you met with today and what was discussed? Did you tell them about the resolution passed in this House last Thursday? Why weren't members of the public or even the Queen's Park press gallery allowed into this meeting?

**Hon. Dalton McGuinty:** I'm pleased to inform the House about the meeting I had earlier today. Several weeks ago, we received a request from the government of Jiangsu, a province with whom we've been twinned now for 23 years. They asked that we might meet with them when they came here with a trade delegation. We said yes to that. Today, I met with Vice-Governor Zhang. I specifically raised the issue of Tibet directly with him. I expressed concerns on behalf of Ontarians regarding human rights, the need for restraint and the importance of a continuing positive dialogue. I shared that directly with Vice-Governor Zhang, and I can say that he listened intently.

**Mr. Robert W. Runciman:** We appreciate that information, but from the Premier's answer, it doesn't sound like there was anything top secret or privileged in what was discussed at the meeting today, yet the media were booted off the property. When they were asked if their removal was hotel protocol, they were told, "No, it's Liberal protocol."

It begs the questions: Why was the meeting held behind closed doors? Why are you afraid to face the press and the public on the issue of Tibet? Why are you shielding Chinese officials from being asked questions about their government's actions in Tibet?

**Hon. Dalton McGuinty:** One of the things that I told Vice-Governor Zhang—he's the vice-governor of one of 22 provinces in China, so Ontarians had better understand what we're talking about here. I told him that immediately afterwards I was going to come to question period, that we had question period on days that the House sits, and that was an opportunity for the opposition parties to hold me to account. He was surprised at that process, but I embrace that process. So contrary to the intimation being made by the leader of the official opposition that somehow we have something that we're not prepared to share with Ontarians, I'm here today at question period. I met earlier today with Vice-Governor Zhang. We had a good discussion on a number of issues, economic and other, and I stand here today to report to the people of Ontario about that.

1430

**Mr. Robert W. Runciman:** I think the Premier's responses raise concerns about the sincerity of the resolution tabled by the government in this House last Thursday.

The economic development minister tries to sneak away to China unnoticed, and when concerns were raised, the Premier's response last week was that human rights is a federal matter. And today, in the face of public protests outside this building, the Premier is holding closed-door meetings with Chinese officials.



We have to ask: Is this the Liberals' economic policy—trade at any cost, no questions asked, even if it means doing business with countries that run roughshod over human rights?

**Hon. Dalton McGuinty:** First of all, I never said that human rights was a federal matter. I said that we look to the federal government to set policy direction when it comes to our foreign relations. Human rights is the responsibility of every single Canadian.

This is what it really comes down to: I guess I could have said we're not going to have a discussion, I could have taken an isolationist approach, but that's out of keeping with the Canadian direction that we have embraced for some 40 years now, which is to pursue constructive engagement. By virtue of having this meeting, I came much closer than any members of the opposition have to talking to somebody in a position of influence and to raising those concerns directly with that representative of the province of Jiangsu on behalf of the people of Ontario.

### HOSPITAL FUNDING

**Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer:** My question is to the Premier. Premier, yesterday's hospital funding announcement was a disappointment because it provided no new money to address the inflationary pressures or the growing volumes. Really, it was only a reannouncement of what was in your budget. Thus, the deficits remain.

We learned today that the LHINs have now directed the hospitals to do whatever it takes to balance their budgets and sign the agreements, even if this means firing nurses and other staff, closing hospital beds or cutting services.

I say to you, Premier: How many beds will close, how many nurses and other staff will be fired or positions simply left vacant, and how many services will be cut?

**Hon. Dalton McGuinty:** To the Minister of Health.

**Hon. George Smitherman:** I was in the very privileged position yesterday to be announcing, on behalf of our government, an additional investment in Ontario's hospitals totalling \$667.2 million. And I do say that the characterization, just as one example, that was offered by the CEO of York Central Hospital did stand in sharp contrast to the characterizations offered by the critic from the opposition.

Further, the member would know that here we are, less than two weeks into a new fiscal year, and already in our province we've told hospitals, through local health integration networks, what they can anticipate for their operating resources.

We further know, therefore, that no hospital can have a deficit, as we are only two weeks into the fiscal year, and we further know that no nurse has been laid off. Until such time as the honourable member has the name of an individual who has been laid off, maybe she should lay off that speculation.

**Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer:** To the Premier: It's not speculation. There is no new money. This is simply the money that was announced in your budget which was

allocated to the LHINs, and it doesn't meet the inflationary pressures and it doesn't meet the growing volumes.

We now hear that LHINs are suggesting to hospitals that have deficits, which will only worsen next year, that they go to the bank and get a loan to pay off their deficits. I say to you, Premier: Why are you directing the LHINs to direct hospitals to go and get a loan at the bank to pay the deficit?

**Hon. George Smitherman:** I know that the member is making that up—I'm sorry, Mr. Speaker. I withdraw.

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Thank you.

**Hon. George Smitherman:** I know the honourable member has a very poor foundation in fact for such an allegation. What I do know for sure is that in two fiscal years this was actually the practice of her party while in government. They said to hospitals, "Run up your debts, and we'll cover them later," and they never did.

But in the order in which we're working, we do anticipate that each hospital will work within the resource that is available to them, because each and every one of us in our daily lives and in the way we work is obligated to do that. But for the honourable member, who is against the health premium and therefore proposes a \$3-billion cut to health care, it is a little generous to suggest that 4.9% is not above the rate of inflation in Ontario, and it's hard to suggest to Ontarians that \$667 million of their money is nothing but a paltry sum.

**Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer:** Premier, you probably know that hospitals are in dire straits today. In fact, you have more supervisors than we have seen in the past and you also have an investigator. There are very, very serious problems. I ask you today, as a result of the deficits, as a result of the fact that you provided no new money—this is the same money that the hospitals had before—how many nursing positions are going to be lost in this province, and how is patient care going to suffer as a result?

**Hon. George Smitherman:** Only the honourable member, a veteran of this place, would try to pretend that new resources allocated within two weeks of the beginning of a fiscal year are not new resources to those hospitals. Only the honourable member would pretend that an aggregate number given in a budget stands as all of the information that hospitals would need to know about their individual application.

On the issue of nurses, I'm very, very proud to be part of a government that has added thousands and thousands of nurses to date and that has a commitment to add, through a \$500-million investment, 9,000 additional nurses in the province of Ontario. No nurse has been laid off as a result of this process. Any discussion of deficits is highly speculative. We're very, very proud to be a government, unlike hers, that makes investments in hospitals—new money every year, each and every hospital.

### HUMAN RIGHTS

**Mr. Howard Hampton:** To the Premier: Ordinarily, when the Premier meets with government leaders from other jurisdictions, the meetings are announced well in



advance and the McGuinty government spares no measure in promoting the event with the media. Can the Premier tell us why his luncheon meeting today with the vice-governor representing Jiangsu, China, was a closed-door meeting and why journalists who attempted to attend were forced to leave the building?

**Hon. Dalton McGuinty:** Let me just tell you a bit more about the meeting. In 1985, Ontario entered into its first twinning agreement with any part of China, and we did so with the province of Jiangsu. When I was in China a couple of years ago now, I also had an opportunity to renew that friendship accord. We were pleased to receive this delegation from Jiangsu, and I was pleased to seize the opportunity to raise some issues of concern to all of us as Ontarians and as Canadians, issues concerning Tibet and human rights. I encouraged the government to practise restraint and to pursue a constructive dialogue. I think it was an important opportunity for me to give expression to those things on behalf of Ontarians, I seized that opportunity and I think I fulfilled my responsibility in so doing.

**Mr. Howard Hampton:** I can see the Premier tried desperately to answer the question. This is the question that people want answered. People saw the McGuinty government last week weave and duck and dodge and try every technique possible to avoid taking a strong position on human rights in Tibet. We all know that if the Premier meets with the governor of Michigan or if the Premier meets with someone from Europe or someone from India, the meeting is announced well in advance, the cameras are lined up; in fact the cameras are triple deep. But here we have a serious human rights problem in Tibet, and the Premier doesn't want any cameras and orders the journalists—orders the journalists—to leave the building.

My question again: What is the McGuinty government trying to hide? Why is the McGuinty government so afraid of taking a strong position in public—

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Thank you. Premier?

1440

**Hon. Dalton McGuinty:** I want to remind the leader of the NDP of the resolution, the motion that we moved last week, which he supported. I believe we were unanimous in this matter, and I'll just refresh his memory by telling him what the motion said. It said, "That the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, as a longstanding friend of China, express concern with the current situation in Tibet and encourage the parties to engage in meaningful dialogue." As a direct offshoot of that, I seized the opportunity to speak with Vice-Governor Zhang today to bring these concerns directly to his attention and asked that he bring that home to his government as well, and relay our concerns. I think that's what Ontarians want us to do and that's why I did it.

**Mr. Howard Hampton:** Premier, it seems to me you're still trying to avoid the question. Provincial governments, state governments and national governments around the world are speaking out on human rights, especially the human rights situation in Tibet today—

except for the McGuinty government. Last week, you tried to say that the trip to China was announced well in advance. Then your own spokesperson said, "We didn't know anything about it." Then you tried to say, "Well, the federal government is really responsible for human rights. It's not a provincial responsibility." We know that's not true. We saw, again at the end of the week, sort of as an afterthought, a motion presented to Legislature. But if you now admit that human rights is important, tell us: Why was the meeting where you say you raised human rights held in secret? Why were the journalists and photographers ordered out?

**Hon. Dalton McGuinty:** Again, the leader of the NDP knows that Minister Papatello on at least two public occasions indicated that she was about to travel to China. As a part of our weekly practice here, on Friday afternoons we put out my agenda for the coming week. So that was made public as well—what I would be doing this week, including the meeting that I had today. The leader of the NDP also knows that together we supported a motion just last week expressing concern with the current situation in Tibet and encouraging the parties to engage in meaningful dialogue. He voted for that. I assume he adopts that approach that we have been bringing here in Ontario and Canada generally. I took the opportunity—seized the opportunity, in fact—to meet with Vice-Governor Zhang and to raise concerns that have been expressed by the people of Ontario.

## POVERTY

**Mr. Howard Hampton:** Today, representatives from municipalities, unions, academic institutions and immigrant groups gathered here at Queen's Park to send the McGuinty government a strong message: that provincial governments can dramatically reduce poverty if they have the political will to implement tough anti-poverty measures—measures like an immediate increase in the minimum wage to \$10 an hour and \$11 an hour by 2011. My question: Will the McGuinty government act now to ensure that we have a minimum wage in Ontario that lifts all full-time workers out of poverty?

**Hon. Dalton McGuinty:** We've just raised the minimum wage once again; I think it was by close to 9%. We're raising it all the way to \$10.25 an hour, and I fully expect that before that point in time we'll have to put in place yet another plan providing for its regular growth so that it's in keeping with and somewhat relevant to the cost of living.

I want to thank, first of all, the group referenced by the leader of the NDP for the work they've been doing collectively and individually. We're going to need their help as we work together to embrace poverty issues. We like, in fairness, to think that we've made some progress. Notwithstanding this time of financial challenge, we invested, in our last budget just put out, an Ontario child benefit to the benefit of 1.3 million children; we have announced once again our support for nutrition—we're doubling funding found in that particular program that



will benefit 84,000 more children; and there's a new dental program for children and low-income families. There's more work to be done, but we are in fact moving forward.

**Mr. Howard Hampton:** And the fact remains that workers who work for the minimum wage in Ontario still fall below the poverty line.

Yes, the McGuinty government, with great fanfare, with yet another photo op, announced an Ontario child benefit. But behind the scenes, the McGuinty government reduces Ontario Works benefits, eliminates the winter clothing allowance and the back-to-school clothing allowance for the poorest kids in the province. Today, the 25 in 5 coalition called for enriching the child benefit and ending the clawback of benefits from families on social assistance.

The question is this: Will the McGuinty government take the advice of the 25 in 5 coalition and immediately stop clawing back benefits from the poorest kids in Ontario?

**Hon. Dalton McGuinty:** I can understand the leader of the NDP's impatience when it comes to these matters. I only wish, when I had the opportunity to observe him at close hand when I sat in that seat from 1990 to 1995, that he expressed the same impatience at that point in time, when he stood on this side of the House.

The leader of the NDP is now saying that the Ontario child benefit is not enough, but he didn't support it; he voted against it. We believe that it's going to make a real difference and a positive difference in the life of a poor family in Ontario. It's going to grow to \$600 and ultimately to \$1,100 per child. We think that's very significant support for our families.

On the matter of the snowsuit, the Minister of Children and Youth Services indicated that we intend to address that issue. In fact, she has addressed that in a very specific way to ensure that no children and no families are compromised as a result of the program as it's been designed.

**Mr. Howard Hampton:** Premier, it's Campaign 2000 that says that social assistance rates in Ontario today are lower than they have been at any time since 1967. You have to go back to 1967 to see a time when social assistance rates were lower than they are today.

The 25 in 5 coalition, along with other anti-poverty activists and experts, understands that a greatly expanded child care system is essential to reducing poverty. Yet, when you look at the McGuinty government's latest budget, there is no mention at all of increasing the number of affordable child care spaces. Why is the McGuinty government turning its back on poor Ontarians by refusing to invest provincial funds in our child care system so we have affordable child care spaces?

**Hon. Dalton McGuinty:** Just to introduce a few facts, a single parent with two children is now receiving 27% more this year than in 2003. We think that's a significant increase. We think that is a very significant increase overall in terms of support of all of these families.

Look at some of the new things that we have invested in along the way to help out poor families in particular. In addition to the Ontario child benefit and our new dental program for children of low-income families, there are new investments in everything from insulin pumps for children with diabetes, free vaccines for 1.5 million children—that saves \$600 per child. We have a newborn screening program, up from two tests to 28. I assume that you could have purchased additional tests, but we've gone from last place to first place in Canada in terms of the number of tests. There's our nutritional support program. We've tripled funding for autism. We have in fact increased social assistance rates as well. The point that I'm making is, we've done much, but there's obviously still more to do.

#### DIAGNOSTIC SERVICES

**Mr. Frank Klees:** My question is to the Minister of Health. On March 25, I gave the minister a letter personally in which I asked him to look into why his ministry continues to deny approval for cone beam CT scanners in dental offices here in Ontario. It's a technology that's approved in every other province in this country. Denying Ontario residents access to that technology means that dentists have to refer their patients to the local hospital and have them queue in the CT lines there.

The proposal to approve this technology will cost the government nothing. It will remove patients from the local hospital's CT lineups and it will actually improve the health care because exposure to radiation is reduced by some 10 times with this technology.

Can the minister report to the House what steps he's taken to ensure that this approval will in fact be expedited, and when we can hear about the results?

1450

**Hon. George Smitherman:** The matter that the honourable member raised with me in the House by way of a letter has been forwarded to the relevant individuals within the ministry. I would anticipate that we'll be in a position to give the honourable member some information in due course. The honourable member has chosen to make this the number one priority for him, but we're working on a wide variety of them at the ministry. But in relatively short order, I should be in a position to give the honourable member some more information.

**Mr. Frank Klees:** While I'm encouraged about that, here's what I find somewhat passing strange: This will cost the government nothing. The approval has been given to every other province in this country. It will take people off of the waiting lists that the minister is so concerned about. Why would it not be as much a priority for the minister as it is for me and as it is for every dentist and patient in the province of Ontario?

I would simply ask that the minister move this item from wherever it might be on his list of priorities closer to the top so that we can get on with this. There's no cost to the government, it will improve health care in the



province of Ontario, and it will in fact not only afford the people of this province access to better health care, but will reduce the very waiting lists that the minister is so concerned about.

**Hon. George Smitherman:** In making the case for fast action, the honourable member says, "Well, there's no cost to the government." But the member himself, a former minister, must understand that the scarcest resource is not financial; it's related to time. The Ministry of Health is a big place. We have lots of work ongoing and we will address this issue appropriately, keeping in mind that we have important priorities like addressing challenges in emergency rooms and the wait times for the people of Ontario and enhancing access to doctors and nurses. I will not be shunting them out of the way to prioritize the member's initiative, but I will be working to address this initiative appropriately within the scope and size of my ministry, recognizing that it is a very specialized matter and accordingly does desire and require some advice—more highly trained and skilled than I am, certainly.

#### ADDICTION SERVICES

**Mr. Michael Prue:** My question is for the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. Today, parents of youth with addictions and mental health problems have come here to make their voices heard. They've not been heard before. Their struggles are shocking. There are only 44 beds for affected youth in the entire province and zero in Toronto, forcing families to spend tens of thousands of dollars of their own money on private care for their kids at risk. Worse, OHIP covers treatments in the United States of America costing, again, tens of thousands of dollars per month. Canadian treatment centres in other provinces are not open to Ontarians in need.

When will the minister commit himself to overhauling a system that he has known for five years is broken and does not work?

**Hon. George Smitherman:** It's rather unfortunate that the honourable member has not been able to keep pace with alterations and investments to the system. I am certainly sorry that it has failed to meet the expectations of some of the parents who were here. As I understand it, the cases they were raising, at least in some circumstances, were from several years past. I can tell the honourable member that our capacity in Ontario has been expanded to 86 beds, and since August 2007 we have introduced 23 additional beds at Pine River in the Shelburne area. As a result, I can confirm to the honourable member and to the House that the number of people in the time since who have been sent out of country has been reduced to two. In fact, we repatriated two patients who were then receiving care in the United States.

I will be happy by way of supplementary to let the member know where future investments can be anticipated, as we are working on developing exactly the strategy that he calls for.

**Mr. Michael Prue:** Back to the minister: The minister will also know that Pine River is only about half full and

that the additional spaces that are there are for privately paying people, not through OHIP. He would know that, I would think.

**Ms. Cheri DiNovo:** They can't afford it.

**Mr. Michael Prue:** Yes. Sadly, so many of them cannot afford it.

Today, the group who call themselves Tragically OHIP have proposed a five-point plan to overhaul Ontario's shameful youth mental health system. The families are here in the audience today, and they're hoping against hope to hear something. They have never had an opportunity in all the years requesting to meet you to actually do that. They are here to tell their stories and demand action from this government. They do not want other families to have to go through what they have had to go through these past five years.

Will the government begin today by investing in youth treatment programs here at home in Ontario adequate to meet the needs?

**Hon. George Smitherman:** Apparently, the honourable member didn't like hearing that we followed the advice, only we didn't wait till now; we did it eight or nine months ago. We paid for 23 additional beds at Pine River, and since then, we've been able to address the circumstances where Ontario's kids were being sent out of province.

Indeed, there are areas where more investment would be required. I would specifically note that we intend to work to address the gaps that are there, specifically for young women and individuals with eating disorders. In the Ottawa community, we know there is a glaring absence of capacity that we will also be moving soon to address.

I'm very happy to meet with the group, and I hope that the honourable member might send over to me the contacts of those individuals.

I'm very, very certain that building on the investments which we've already made at Pine River, with 23 additional beds, and with the additional capacity that we intend to implement, we'll be able to enhance the capacity all across the breadth of our vast province, to the benefit of these patients.

#### ADDICTION SERVICES

**Mrs. Carol Mitchell:** My question is also for the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. Minister, the NDP held a press conference today to highlight their concerns about funding for youth residential substance abuse and addiction treatment facilities.

Substance abuse is a concern for all Ontarians, and we want to make sure that people can get help when they need it. Would the minister please tell the House what you are doing to improve access to treatment for youth with substance abuse problems in Ontario?

**Hon. George Smitherman:** I think we had a good chance in the earlier question to identify some of those pieces of progress that we're making with respect to residential treatment.



It's important to acknowledge as well that in an environment where a young person might be experiencing good supports at home and good connection to family and others, working through programs in local communities, not necessarily residential programs, is also important.

In the province of Ontario, we do have 46 substance abuse treatment programs that are designed and oriented particularly for youth. I mentioned that eight of those programs, representing 86 beds, provide specialized residential services and are addressing youth that are 12 to 24.

It's a little bit unfortunate that the New Democratic Party was not able to be current in the characterizations that they were making.

**Mrs. Carol Mitchell:** I know that there are some youths who have to travel outside of Ontario to receive residential substance abuse treatment services. Minister, can you please tell this House how you're helping to improve access to treatment so those youths can receive the help that they need closer to home?

**Hon. George Smitherman:** Obviously, it's a priority at all times to be able to offer the care as close to home as is possible because of what I just mentioned in the earlier answer: the need to have supportive families and other environments as part and parcel of the process.

I'm very pleased that with the additional \$3-million annual investment that we have made at Pine River since August 2007, there has been a very substantial reduction to two individuals who have been sent out of the province of Ontario.

As I mentioned earlier, our mission to enhance access to these services is not complete, mentioning particularly that young women—those with eating disorders and the Ottawa community stand as three examples, certainly, where we intend to make investments that will allow us to very substantially complete building the capacity necessary to support these young people in the province of Ontario, to address the very, very dramatic challenges related to substance abuse.

1500

## TOBACCO CONTROL

**Mr. Norm Miller:** Last week, I asked the Minister of Small Business and Entrepreneurship a direct question about what he was going to do to help small business owners comply with the new retail display ban for tobacco products. Instead of answering the question, he deflected it to the Minister of Health Promotion. So I ask the minister again: What specific measures has your ministry taken to help convenience store owners comply with these new regulations?

**Hon. Harinder S. Takhar:** Let me thank the member for asking this question. First of all, we need to understand why we're doing this. This whole ban is about saving lives and improving health care costs. Every year in Ontario, about 13,000 people die because of smoking. So we want to make sure that these people are protected,

our young people are protected and our health care costs are reduced.

Answering your specific question, I want to tell you that we have been working very closely with the convenience store association and also the Ontario Korean Businessmen's Association. In fact, I just met with them last week, and they are very happy with the steps that our government has taken.

I will be able to elaborate more in the supplementary question.

**Mr. Norm Miller:** First of all, the question was not about the health aspects of this. We all support reducing smoking in this Legislature. Certainly I'm hearing different stories from the business operators.

This legislation was passed over two years ago, but the government waited until this January before it introduced any guidelines to help convenience store operators comply with this retail display ban. As a result of this government's lack of planning, many businesses are being given only a few weeks to completely redesign displays that, in some cases, have been in place for over 30 years.

Sonny Cho of the Ontario Korean Businessmen's Association said to CTV news, "Ontario's convenience stores, thousands of which are run by Korean-Canadians, are being pushed to the brink of bankruptcy by this government's anti-small-business policies."

Minister, why did you government wait for nearly two years before it introduced the guidelines to help the convenience store operators who continue to be ignored by this government?

**Hon. Harinder S. Takhar:** This issue is about health care costs and it is about saving lives in this province.

I have met with the Ontario Convenience Stores Association and also the Ontario Korean Businessmen's Association several times. In fact, just last week I met with them. Let me tell you what they said to me. David Bryans, who is the president of the Ontario Convenience Stores Association—this is what he wrote to me:

"I would like to take this opportunity to briefly thank you for all the help and support that you, your cabinet colleagues and the Premier have given to Ontario's independent, family-run convenience stores ... as I have said in the past, all OCSA members will comply with the Smoke-Free Ontario Act."

I really want to commend them for their co-operation and thank them for the contribution they make to this province.

## EDUCATION FUNDING

**Mr. Rosario Marchese:** My question is to the Minister of Education. When the Toronto District School Board had local control of its own revenues, it was able to build and maintain community swimming pools across the city. Now that the McGuinty government controls the revenues, why is it that the Toronto District School Board is being forced to close these valuable community assets?



**Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne:** I just want to off the top talk a little bit about what we have done with the Toronto District School Board over the last four years. The board has more than \$360 million every year, more than it had when we came into office. This year alone, there is a program enhancement grant. Across the province there's \$45 million, but the Toronto board gets \$5.4 million that could be applied directly to sports programs.

The point here is that the Toronto District School Board and every other board across the province has to establish its own priorities. Since we came into office, every year we have increased resources to the boards across the province, including the TDSB, to allow them to meet the needs of their communities. It is an anomaly that swimming pools in Toronto, historically, were built in schools. They are community assets. The Toronto board and the city of Toronto need to work together to keep those assets in place.

**Mr. Rosario Marchese:** The swimming pools in the Toronto District School Board are assets that have already been built and paid for by the local communities. These communities have made the investment in the health and safety of their children. Will the minister assume the financial responsibility and keep these schools open, or will she be responsible for the closure of these pools come June of this year?

**Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne:** I am on record as a school trustee and as a citizen of this city supporting the community assets in this city, and I will not take the accusation from the member opposite that I don't stand up for the community. I am absolutely committed to increasing the support for the Toronto District School Board, which we have been doing for the last four years—\$360 million more on their bottom line every year; \$5.4 million this year that they could apply to their sports programs.

We will continue to work with the Toronto District School Board. I have spoken to councillors, the mayor and school trustees. This is a community issue that needs to be addressed, and I hope the Toronto District School Board will go back and look at its priorities.

## WATER QUALITY

**Mr. Lou Rinaldi:** My question is to the Minister of the Environment. Every one of us in this province has a fundamental right to safe, clean drinking water. It is essential that our water is protected from source to tap and that the rivers, lakes and groundwater that give us our drinking water are protected. I know that our government has been vigilant about protecting our drinking water and in planning for the future to ensure that we have clean, safe drinking water. I am proud that we have implemented every one of Justice O'Connor's recommendations.

Source protection committees in my riding are currently preparing their source protection plans under the Clean Water Act, which set out how they will protect municipal drinking water supplies. Minister, how is our

government helping these source protection committees as they work through these plans?

**Hon. John Gerretsen:** Let me first of all compliment this member for all the hard work he does not only in his riding, but he's truly concerned about the environment.

We know that through our source water protection committees that are operating throughout the province, they are there to protect water at the source and through the entire system. Our government passed the landmark Clean Water Act to ensure that the source of our drinking water is protected, and we are committed to funding the cost of source water protection planning. That's why we're investing more than \$23 million, of which his source water protection committee got some money as well to help conservation authorities and municipalities finish the technical studies they need to develop plans for protecting local sources of drinking water. That builds on our previous commitment of \$120 million that was spent between 2004 and 2008 for technical studies and capacity building.

It's all built on good science. Studies need to be done so that we know how to protect the sources of our water in our various communities. The work is being done—

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Thank you. Supplementary.

**Mr. Lou Rinaldi:** I'm pleased to hear that our government is helping municipalities, conservation authorities and source protection committees to undertake this important work in source protection. I can tell you that the conservation authorities in my ridings were thrilled when I announced over \$2 million in funding to support source water protection in 54 municipal drinking water supplies within this region.

On Friday past, I visited the Lower Trent Conservation Authority, where representatives from all five CAs were present to discuss this vital source that we must protect now and for generations to come. But protecting our drinking water is a shared responsibility. Individuals too have an essential role to play in protecting the sources of our drinking water. Property owners and small businesses in rural Ontario are making changes that help protect drinking water sources, like upgrading wells. Is our government helping individual Ontarians to protect their drinking water sources?

*Interjections.*

**Hon. John Gerretsen:** The opposition may laugh about these matters, but we take the protection of our sources of water and our drinking water very seriously on this side of the House.

We listened to the property owners and small businesses in rural Ontario, and they told us they needed financial assistance in order to make the changes that help protect drinking water sources, like upgrading wells and septic systems or installing runoff and erosion controls. Last year—

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** I'd just ask members to have some respect. There's been generally a good attitude in the chamber today of listening and allowing



questions to be asked. So I'd just ask the co-operation of the opposition benches. Minister?

**Hon. John Gerretsen:** Speaker, I cannot understand why the opposition doesn't want to listen to the good news of this government when it comes to our environment and our drinking water sources.

Last year we provided over \$7 million under the Ontario drinking water stewardship program for farmers, rural property owners and small businesses. The funding is there to help them put measures in place to safeguard drinking water sources and to provide education—the opposition can use some of that—and outreach as far as our drinking water sources are concerned.

We have committed an additional \$21 million over the next three years. We want to make sure that our drinking water is the best—

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Thank you. New question.

1510

### TOBACCO CONTROL

**Ms. Laurie Scott:** My question is to the Minister of Revenue. Minister, on your website there are numerous news releases from your ministry that boast of your revenue investigators collecting taxes and seizing illegal tobacco products from vendors across Ontario. Each one of your news releases contains this line: "Vigorous enforcement of the Tobacco Tax Act is an important component of the Ontario government's smoke-free Ontario strategy."

As the Minister of Revenue, can you tell us if your government is collecting cigarette taxes on the revenue from the smoke shop located on government-owned property on Argyle Street in Caledonia?

**Hon. Monique M. Smith:** To the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services.

**Hon. Rick Bartolucci:** I thank the minister for allowing me the opportunity to answer the question. Since October 2003, Ontario has taken many steps to attack illegal, contraband cigarette sales, including the Tobacco Tax Act. Convictions under the act have doubled between 2005 and 2007, and over the past two years 28 million contraband cigarettes, 177,000 untaxed cigars and a large quantity of fine-cut tobacco have been seized by Ministry of Revenue investigators and inspectors. Indeed, we are proud of the work the investigators and the inspectors are doing in the ministry.

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Supplementary? The member from Thornhill.

**Mr. Peter Shurman:** The revenue ministry's website "discourages non-compliance through enforcement activities." Last year, this province lost \$565 million in tobacco tax revenue due to the sale of illicit cigarettes in smoke shacks and the inability of this government to enforce its own laws. Illicit cigarettes now count for 37% of all cigarettes sold in the province, and it's estimated to go to 50% of cigarettes sold by 2010.

Will the minister inform this House as to when the people of Ontario can expect this ministry to order the

seizure of tobacco products from smoke shacks and order the collection of all outstanding taxes owed from the sale of illegal cigarettes?

**Hon. Rick Bartolucci:** The member talks about enforcement. Indeed, we are very, very proud of the collective partnerships we've formed with regard to enforcement. But in fact enforcement against contraband tobacco was strengthened in our 2004 budget, our 2006 budget, our 2007 budget and our 2008 budget. Sadly, both parties across the way voted against that enforcement.

### AUTISM TREATMENT

**Ms. Andrea Horwath:** My question is for the Minister of Children and Youth Services. Recently, at a town hall meeting hosted by parents of children with autism, the minister could not say when waiting lists for treatment would end for children who, as the parents described, were rotting on the vine, waiting for three years or more for treatment. What is this minister's plan and what is the timing for clearing the waiting lists for children with autism, or will the McGuinty government continue to leave children, as parents so heart-wrenchingly described that night, "rotting on the vine"?

**Hon. Deborah Matthews:** Thank you for the question. I was delighted to have been at the town hall meeting with the Minister of Education to meet with parents of children with autism. I think both of us learned a tremendous amount from them, and it further fuels our commitment to providing better services for kids with autism.

Our commitment is well demonstrated. We removed the previous government's age-six cut-off because we don't think a child's treatment should be cut off on the day they celebrate their sixth birthday. We have tripled the spending on autism; we have almost tripled the number of children receiving IBI therapy, but we know that it's more than just IBI therapy that is important to families with children with autism.

**Ms. Andrea Horwath:** It is unconscionable that the McGuinty government abandoned so many children with autism across Ontario by letting them languish on growing waiting lists. Notwithstanding what this minister says, the waiting lists are in fact growing for children with autism: 1,063 children as of December, plus another almost 400—381—just waiting for their assessment. Will the minister guarantee today that the government's new benchmarks for assessing children with autism are not going to result in a single child being cut off from their current treatment to make room for the 1,444 children on waiting lists today?

**Hon. Deborah Matthews:** I'd like to ask the Minister of Education to respond.

**Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne:** When the Minister of Children and Youth Services and I attended the town hall, we talked about how probably the most important thing we can do for children with autism is to help them and their families get the placement that they need, get the service that they need when they need it; so, when



those children are very young, to get the IBI therapy. When they are ready to go to school and when they need a transition from that IBI therapy into a classroom setting, it's very, very important that we have the trained personnel in the schools to provide that service. We have instructed school boards to train students. We are providing money in the community and in school boards to train in ABA. There are thousands more people—principals, teachers, support staff across the province—who are able to deal with kids with autism in the school. That's the answer: to get them the right placement when they need it.

### EMPLOYMENT

**Mr. Bill Mauro:** My question is for the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. Minister, it has been brought to my attention that the federal government is trying to pass legislation that will bring in changes to the Canadian Grain Commission. Bill C-39 will mean that as many as 220 workers will lose their jobs in Canada, and up to 100 of those may be in my community of Thunder Bay. I'd like the minister to tell me what kind of impact this bill will have on my community and others in Canada if it passes through the House of Commons.

**Hon. Leona Dombrowsky:** This is indeed an important question. While this is a federal bill debated in the House of Commons in Ottawa, it impacts not just all Canadians, but particularly in Ontario as well.

One of the parts of the bill would remove the requirement—right now, grain that is destined to be sold within Canada is usually shipped to either Churchill, Vancouver or Thunder Bay for inspection. This bill will remove that requirement. So there's a lot of concern within the agricultural community about the quality of grain and how it can be monitored as it is moved through this country.

The other part of that is what the honourable member has already identified in his question, in that a lot of jobs in Thunder Bay—100, to be exact—would be put at risk if in fact this bill is passed. So I think that at a time when, particularly in northern Ontario, we are looking for ways to support those communities and the very good work that they do, including work to protect our food products here in Canada and in Ontario, those are the kinds of jobs that we certainly should be supporting and not looking to remove.

**Mr. Bill Mauro:** I know this government has made investments to create and stimulate jobs in the economy. The rural economic development program helps rural and northern communities develop well-qualified workers, better jobs and an innovative economy. I understand that an additional \$30 million over the next four years was announced for the rural economic development program in the 2008 budget. These investments are very much appreciated, and we need more programs like this to help create jobs in northern and rural Ontario.

Minister, could you please tell this House more about these investments and how the McGuinty government is

standing up for the working people and creating jobs in northern and rural Ontario?

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Excuse me. Explain how your supplementary related to your first question.

**Mr. Bill Mauro:** Absolutely, Speaker. It's all about jobs in northern Ontario.

**Hon. Leona Dombrowsky:** Indeed, we are always looking for ways to support our rural economies, whether it's with inspecting grain that comes through various ports—and in this case Thunder Bay. I'm particularly happy that the member from Thunder Bay has asked about the rural economic development program, because it's a program that has worked very well for the Thunder Bay community, and it's because of the partnerships that have been forged in Thunder Bay that our government saw fit to continue to invest. In fact, we've doubled the dollars that we would intend to direct towards rural economic development. Some of the investments through RED in Thunder Bay were \$500,000 for the construction of the Thunder Bay region training complex and \$239,000 to help develop PARO Centre for Women's Enterprise in northeastern Ontario. So in total, since we came to office, 146 projects across Ontario have been supported through the rural economic development program.

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### SCHOOL BUS SAFETY

**Mr. Frank Klees:** My question is to the Minister of Transportation and it relates to a press release that his ministry issued today. The title of the press release is, "Ontario School Buses Get Top Grades: McGuinty Government Keeping Children Safe." I know the minister shares all of our concern for the safety of the children in this province. What I fail to see is how the rest of the release squares with the title. The release goes on to tell us that as a result of a two-day blitz, there were 12 buses taken off the road for significant repairs; 92 buses were under ministry orders for repairs. I want to ask the minister whether he feels that it's acceptable that even one bus should leave the parking lot and take on children if in fact there are serious repairs. Does this really merit top grades for our schools?

**Hon. James J. Bradley:** I'm glad the—I almost said "the minister," because he had the privilege of being the minister at one time. It's a good question. I think he and I would agree, and I think all members of the Legislature would agree, that we strive for perfection in this regard and that any deviation from the best of standards is not acceptable to anybody in this province. The 94% compliance—either being acceptable to or exceeding the rules and regulations of the province—I am told is high. Nevertheless, he and I would agree, and all members of the Legislature would agree, that 100% compliance is all that is acceptable in this province. That's why we conducted a two-week blitz of over 1,900 buses in the province to determine what the problem was and to



address those problems. I know he agrees they should be addressed.

**Mr. Frank Klees:** I'm pleased to hear the minister's response, and it was in fact a two-week blitz. Unfortunately, that blitz took place after the media exposed the fact that there were serious problems in our school busing industry. I know that there are responsible operators, but I would ask this of the minister: that he would tell us specifically what steps he is planning to take as the minister to ensure that we do get to the 100% compliance, that the operators will not dare to roll one of their buses off their parking lot and pick up children in this province without being absolutely certain of the safety of those buses.

Finally, I will ask the minister: Will he agree to publish publicly the names of the operators whose buses were pulled off in the course of this two-week blitz so that we know and so that the school districts know who is responsible for endangering our children?

**Hon. James J. Bradley:** I think first of all the member has agreed, and we both agree, on the importance of a blitz of this kind. He would know, again as a former minister, that on an ongoing basis we have these kinds of inspections taking place. What happens is that Ministry of Transportation officials—sometimes they can be police, if there's reason to believe that there's a major problem—go to the sites or terminals themselves. They examine the buses to determine the road safety record of those buses. They require the drivers themselves to do a daily inspection of those buses—I think it's a 46-point inspection, or something around that neighbourhood, that takes place. Our ministry officials will be meeting with the officials of the Ontario School Bus Association to underline once again the importance of perfection in this regard. Any information that we're permitted to release we will certainly—

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Thank you. New question?

#### MUNICIPAL INFRASTRUCTURE

**Mr. Gilles Bisson:** Oh, you almost ragged the puck long enough that time. That was good.

My question is to the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal. Minister, you'll know that in the late 1990s, the province downloaded to municipalities much of the provincial highway system. In fact, the city of Timmins saw 87 kilometres of highways downloaded to the municipality, which means to say, they've got to maintain these roads—they've got to re-asphalt them, they've got to replace bridges and do all the things that need to be done.

Part of that download was Highway 67. Just to give you a sense, Highway 67 is a provincial highway that connects Highway 11, the TransCanada, to Highway 101. This is not a municipal road we're talking about; we're talking about a provincial highway. On that highway is a bridge, and the province left the municipality with about \$1.5 million to replace that bridge and fix it when the

time came. We're now down to one lane on that bridge, and it's going to cost \$5 million to fix. Are you prepared to help the city of Timmins by coughing up some much-needed dollars to fix the bridge on your provincial highway?

**Hon. David Caplan:** I know that the member is well aware of the budget initiative, the road-and-bridge funding that was provided to all municipalities, and I know that the city of Timmins did share in that.

In fact, in relation to the municipal infrastructure investment initiative, I had a chance to speak with Mayor Laughren about a project that the city of Timmins did bring forward for approval by the Ministry of Public Infrastructure and Renewal and by this government. I am very pleased to let the member from Timmins—James Bay know that Timmins, in fact, was approved under the municipal infrastructure investment initiative. I know that they're quite pleased to be able to be recipients of that funding.

I know that we have a long way to go from the era of downloading, the downloading which began—court security and water testing under the third party, and other elements of downloading which occurred under the Conservative Party's watch. I can tell you, Speaker—

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Thank you. Supplementary?

**Mr. Gilles Bisson:** That was almost twice they ragged the puck on me, but I got it in anyway.

I want to say in response that, yes, the city of Timmins got \$7.5 million, but that was for a water plant. We know that they got the money, but that was in order to fix their water plant. You know as well as I do that Mayor Tom Laughren talked to you specifically about this bridge, and his officials are talking to your officials about getting the dollars necessary to fix the bridge.

Here's the picture: We have a provincial highway that has a bridge on it and it's down to one lane. That means to say that if you want to go between Highway 11 and 67, either you detour by an hour or you go over a one-lane bridge, and for many trucks, that's not an option.

My question to you is this: Tom Laughren, mayor of the city of Timmins, and council are asking for your help. Are you prepared to put up some dollars to replace that bridge?

**Hon. David Caplan:** In addition to the \$7 million that was provided to the city of Timmins, \$1.1 million was provided to them for repair of roads and bridges in the recent provincial budget.

There are a number of tools, including the Ontario Strategic Infrastructure Financing Authority as well as others, which we are of course prepared to make available to the city of Timmins, as we would to any municipality. I can tell you that that relationship that we enjoy with Mayor Laughren and with council has been strengthened. It is much better since the days when court security and water testing were off-loaded by the third party on to the municipality. It's much better than the days when roads, bridges, land ambulance and public health were downloaded on to municipalities by the Conservative Party.



I can tell you as well that officials in my ministry as well as the Ministry of Finance are working on the Provincial-Municipal Fiscal and Service Delivery Review and that we—

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** The time for question period has expired.

**Mr. Norm Miller:** Mr. Speaker, pursuant to standing order 37(a), I wish to give notice that I'm unsatisfied with the answer received today, and I ask for a late show.

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Thank you. You know to file the proper papers with the table.

## VISITORS

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** On behalf of the member from Scarborough Southwest, I just want to welcome the teacher and students of R.H. King Academy in the west public gallery. Welcome today, students.

## PETITIONS

### LORD'S PRAYER

**Mr. Bill Murdoch:** I have a petition—which seems to be the concern of people from all over Canada, actually—from Guy Jobin from St. Joseph, Gatineau, Quebec. It's to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the current Liberal government is proposing to eliminate the Lord's Prayer from daily proceedings in the Ontario Legislature; and

"Whereas the recitation of the Lord's Prayer has opened the Legislature every day since the 19th century; and

"Whereas the Lord's Prayer's message of forgiveness and the avoidance of evil is universal to the human condition; it is a valuable guide and lesson for a chamber that is too often an arena of conflict; and

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"Whereas recognizing the diversity of the people of Ontario should be an inclusive process, not one which excludes traditions such as the Lord's Prayer;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, ask the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to preserve the daily recitation of the Lord's Prayer by the Speaker in the Legislature."

I've signed it and I will give it to Marcus.

### HOME CARE

**M<sup>me</sup> France Gélinas:** I have a petition from SEIU and the people of Owen Sound.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ontario government has continued the practice of competitive bidding for home care services; and

"Whereas the competitive bidding process has increased the privatization of Ontario's health care

delivery, in direct violation of the Commitment to the Future of Medicare Act, 2004; and

"Whereas competitive bidding for home care services has decreased both the continuity and quality of care available to home care clients; and

"Whereas home care workers do not enjoy the same employment rights, such as successor rights, as all other Ontario workers have, which deprives them of termination rights, seniority rights and the right to move with their work when their employer agency loses a contract;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"We call on the government of Ontario:

"(1) to immediately stop the competitive bidding for home care services so home care clients can receive the continuity and quality of care they deserve; and

"(2) to extend successor rights under the Labour Relations Act to home care workers to ensure the home care sector is able to retain a workforce that is responsive to clients' needs."

I fully support this petition. I affix my name to it and I will hand it over to Victoria.

### LORD'S PRAYER

**Mrs. Maria Van Bommel:** I want to present this petition on behalf of the congregation of Reverend Richard VanderVaart in Dresden, part of my riding of Lambton-Kent-Middlesex.

"Petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Premier Dalton McGuinty has called on the Ontario Legislature to consider removing the Lord's Prayer from its daily proceedings; and

"Whereas the Lord's Prayer has been an integral part of our parliamentary heritage that was first established in 1793 under Lieutenant Governor John Graves Simcoe; and

"Whereas the Lord's Prayer is today a significant part of the religious heritage of millions of Ontarians of culturally diverse backgrounds;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to continue its long-standing practice of using the Lord's Prayer as part of its daily proceedings."

### LORD'S PRAYER

**Mr. John Yakabuski:** I have a petition on behalf of Reverend Randy Liedtke and the parishioners of St. Timothy's Lutheran church in Pembroke.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the current Liberal government is proposing to eliminate the Lord's Prayer from its place at the beginning of daily proceedings in the Legislature; and

"Whereas the recitation of the Lord's Prayer has opened the Legislature every day since the 19th century; and



"Whereas the Lord's Prayer's message of forgiveness and the avoidance of evil is universal to the human condition; it is a valuable guide and lesson for a chamber that is too often an arena of conflict; and

"Whereas recognizing the diversity of the people of Ontario should be an inclusive process, not one which excludes traditions such as the Lord's Prayer;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, ask the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to preserve the daily recitation of the Lord's Prayer by the Speaker in the Legislature."

I support this petition and send it down with Michael to the table.

#### EDUCATION FUNDING

**Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti:** I have a very large petition here presented by both W.A. Porter Collegiate Institute and R.H. King Academy. It's made up of over 1,760 signatures and it's addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"... We, the undersigned, are concerned citizens who petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to act now to stop the closure of our school pool."

I present this large petition. It's straightforward. I give it to page Adam here today to be filed with the clerk.

#### WYE MARSH WILDLIFE CENTRE

**Mr. Garfield Dunlop:** "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Wye Marsh Wildlife Centre, located in the township of Tay, manages approximately 3,000 acres of environmentally sensitive land which is owned by the province of Ontario; and

"Whereas over 50,000 people visit the Wye Marsh Wildlife Centre each year; and

"Whereas over 20,000 students from across Ontario visit the Wye Marsh Wildlife Centre each year, receiving curriculum-based environmental education not available in schools; and

"Whereas the Wye Marsh Wildlife Centre receives no stable funding from any level of government;

"We, the undersigned, petition the province of Ontario to establish a reasonable and stable long-term funding formula so that the Wye Marsh Wildlife Centre can continue to operate and exist into the future."

I'm pleased to sign my name to it and give it to Prakash.

#### HOSPITAL FUNDING

**Mr. Joe Dickson:** I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Central East local health integration network (CE-LHIN) board of directors has approved the Rouge Valley Health System's deficit elimination plan, subject to public meetings; and

"Whereas, despite the significant expansion of the Ajax-Pickering hospital, its largest in its 53-year history,

a project that could reach \$100 million, of which 90% is funded by the Ontario government, this plan now calls for the ill-advised transfer of 20 mental health unit beds from the Ajax-Pickering hospital to the Centenary health centre in Scarborough; and

"Whereas one of the factors for the successful treatment of patients in the mental health unit is support from family and friends, and the distance to Centenary health centre would negatively impact the quality of care for residents of Ajax and Pickering; and

"Whereas it is also imperative for Rouge Valley Health System to balance its budget, eliminate its deficit and debt and realize the benefits of additional Ontario government funding;

"We, the undersigned, therefore petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Rouge Valley Health System continue to provide the current level of service to our Ajax-Pickering hospital, which now serves the fastest-growing communities of west Durham; and

"That the Ajax-Pickering hospital retain the badly needed 20-bed mental health unit."

I hereby affix my signature.

#### LORD'S PRAYER

**Mr. John O'Toole:** It's a pleasure to present a petition on behalf of my constituents in the riding of Durham. This one is from the Bowmanville Baptist Church on Concession Road in Bowmanville, and one of the petition's signators is Andy Black. It reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the current Liberal government is proposing to eliminate the Lord's Prayer from its rightful place at the beginning of daily proceedings in the Ontario Legislature; and

"Whereas the recitation of the Lord's Prayer has opened the Legislature every day since the 19th century; and

"Whereas the Lord's Prayer's message of forgiveness and the avoidance of evil is universal to the human condition; it is a valuable guide and lesson for a chamber that is too often an arena of conflict; and

"Whereas recognizing the diversity of the people of Ontario should be an inclusive process, not one which excludes traditions such as the Lord's Prayer;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, ask the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to preserve the daily recitation of the Lord's Prayer by the Speaker in the Legislature."

I'm pleased to sign this in support and present it to one of the new pages, Adam.

#### FIREARMS CONTROL

**Mrs. Amrit Mangat:** I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas innocent people are being victimized by the growing number of unlawful firearms in our communities; and

"Whereas police officers, military personnel and lawfully licensed persons are the only people allowed to possess firearms; and

"Whereas a growing number of unlawful firearms are transported, smuggled and found in motor vehicles; and

"Whereas impounding motor vehicles and suspending driver's licences of persons possessing unlawful firearms in motor vehicles would aid the police in their efforts to make our streets safer;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to pass Bill 56, the Unlawful Firearms in Vehicles Act, 2008, into law so that we can reduce the number of crimes involving firearms in our communities."

I support this petition and affix my signature, and I'm asking page Marco to carry it for me.

#### LORD'S PRAYER

**Mr. John Yakabuski:** I table this petition on behalf of Wayne Kirby, the rector's warden, and the parishioners of St. Barnabas Anglican Church in Deep River.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the current Liberal government is proposing to eliminate the Lord's Prayer from its place at the beginning of daily proceedings in the Legislature; and

"Whereas the recitation of the Lord's Prayer has opened the Legislature every day since the 19th century; and

"Whereas the Lord's Prayer's message of forgiveness and the avoidance of evil is universal to the human condition; it is a valuable guide and lesson for a chamber that is too often an arena of conflict; and

"Whereas recognizing the diversity of the people of Ontario should be an inclusive process, not one which excludes traditions such as the Lord's Prayer;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, ask the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to preserve the daily recitation of the Lord's Prayer by the Speaker in the Legislature."

I support this petition, affix my signature and send it down with Victoria.

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#### HOSPITAL FUNDING

**Mr. Bob Delaney:** I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario that has been sent to me by a number of people in the Mississauga and Etobicoke area. It reads as follows:

"Whereas wait times for access to surgical procedures in the western GTA area served by the Mississauga Halton LHIN are growing despite the vigorous capital project activity at the hospitals within the Mississauga Halton LHIN boundaries; and

"Whereas 'day surgery' procedures could be performed in an off-site facility, thus greatly increasing the ability of surgeons to perform more procedures, alleviating wait times for patients, and freeing up operating theatre space in hospitals for more complex procedures

that may require post-operative intensive care unit support and a longer length of stay in hospital;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care allocate funds in its 2008-09 capital budget to begin planning and construction of an ambulatory surgery centre located in western Mississauga to serve the Mississauga-Halton area and enable greater access to 'day surgery' procedures that comprise about four fifths of all surgical procedures performed."

I'm pleased to sign and support this petition and to ask page Alex to carry it for me.

#### LORD'S PRAYER

**Mr. Jim Wilson:** "Petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Premier Dalton McGuinty has called on the Ontario Legislature to consider removing the Lord's Prayer from its daily proceedings; and

"Whereas the Lord's Prayer has been an integral part of our parliamentary heritage that was first established in 1793 under Lieutenant Governor John Graves Simcoe; and

"Whereas the Lord's Prayer is today a significant part of the religious heritage of millions of Ontarians of culturally diverse backgrounds;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to continue its long-standing practice of using the Lord's Prayer as part of its daily proceedings."

I want to thank Trinity United Church in Beeton for sending me that petition.

#### HOSPITAL FUNDING

**Mr. Joe Dickson:** I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the Central East local health integration network ... board of directors has approved the Rouge Valley Health System's deficit elimination plan, subject to public meetings; and

"Whereas it is important to ensure that the new birthing unit at Centenary hospital, a \$20-million expansion that will see 16 new labour, delivery, recovery and postpartum (LDRP) birthing rooms and an additional 21 postpartum rooms added by October 2008, will not cause any decline in the pediatric services currently provided at the Ajax-Pickering hospital; and

"Whereas, with the significant expansion of the Ajax-Pickering hospital, the largest in its 53-year history, a project that could reach \$100 million, of which 90% is funded by the Ontario government, it is important to continue to have a complete maternity unit at the Ajax hospital; and

"Whereas it is also imperative for the Rouge Valley Health System to balance its budget, eliminate its deficit



and debt and realize the benefits of additional Ontario government funding; and

"Whereas the parents of Ajax and Pickering deserve the right to have their children born in their own community, where they have chosen to live and work;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Rouge Valley Health System continue to provide the current level of service; and

"That our Ajax-Pickering hospital now serves the fastest-growing communities of west Durham; and

"That the Ajax-Pickering hospital retain its full maternity unit."

### HOSPITAL FUNDING

**Mr. Bill Murdoch:** I have another petition that is important to the people of south Grey and all over Grey county and Bruce county.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Grey Bruce Health Services' Markdale hospital is the only health care facility between Owen Sound and Orangeville on the Highway 10 corridor;

"Whereas the community of Markdale has been promised a new state-of-the-art hospital in Markdale;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care announce as soon as possible its intended construction date for the new Markdale hospital and ensure that the care needs of the patients and families of our community are met in a timely manner."

I've also signed this and will give it to Michael.

### DRIVER LICENCES

**Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti:** I have a petition from constituents of Scarborough Southwest. It's addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario and it reads as follows:

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas we request the vision waiver package of the Ministry of Transportation to be amended to include a motorcycle endorsement. Under current legislation, a class G licence is all that is allowed.

"This is discriminatory in nature. Current licensing practice assumes that all who apply for licensing will meet the visual field requirement without undergoing actual field vision testing.

"We feel that all people should be judged equally and be required to pass the test given to the general public. Any single group, regardless of medical history, should require no special tests or standards.

"We feel if an individual passes the provincial written and road test requirements, it should be up to their own discretion to operate a vehicle of their choice."

I submit this petition to page Prakash, who is here with me today.

## ORDERS OF THE DAY

### HIGHWAY TRAFFIC AMENDMENT ACT (SPEED-LIMITING SYSTEMS), 2008

#### LOI DE 2008 MODIFIANT LE CODE DE LA ROUTE (SYSTÈMES LIMITEURS DE VITESSE)

Mr. Bradley moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 41, An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act in relation to the use of speed-limiting systems in commercial motor vehicles / Projet de loi 41, Loi modifiant le Code de la route relativement à l'utilisation de systèmes limiteurs de vitesse dans les véhicules utilitaires.

**Hon. James J. Bradley:** I'll be sharing my time with the parliamentary assistant for transportation, Mr. Brown.

Our government has introduced legislation that, if enacted, will help protect our environment and improve road safety. This proposed legislation will cap the speed of large trucks at 105 kilometres per hour for all trucks built after 1995. This is an opportunity for us to bring about cleaner air and safer roads for our friends and family.

Our government is building on five years of action with an ambitious plan to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. If passed, this legislation would reduce greenhouse gas emissions by as much as 280,000 tonnes a year, the equivalent of taking 2,700 tractor-trailers off the road each and every year.

It would save the trucking industry an estimated 100 million litres of diesel fuel annually. With today's high fuel prices, that could amount to a fuel savings worth approximately \$116 million each year for Ontario's trucking industry, based on Transport Canada's environmental benefits of speed limiters report. In addition, it has been estimated that speed limiters will also reduce the wear and tear on trucks, reducing maintenance costs.

Go Green, Ontario's action plan on climate change, is Ontario's greenprint for climate solutions. This plan includes ambitious but achievable short-, medium- and long-term emissions reduction targets.

Our government already has a number of important initiatives under way to help us reach our climate change goals. They include:

—the green commercial vehicle project, a four-year, \$15-million pilot project to help businesses switch to cleaner technologies such as hybrid power;

—high-occupancy vehicle lanes, our long-term plan to encourage more people to carpool and use public transit, and to reduce traffic congestion on our province's highways;

—Move Ontario 2020, a \$17.5-billion plan to build more than 900 kilometres of rapid transit in the greater Toronto and Hamilton areas, the largest transit investment in all Canadian history; and



—more recently, the Next Generation of Jobs Fund, a \$1.15-billion fund to support companies whose products reduce pollution and energy use.

I'm sure most of us have experienced a speeding truck zooming by us on our highways, burning excessive amounts of fuel. We anticipate that speed limiters alone will help Ontario achieve approximately 2% of our 2014 greenhouse gas emissions reductions target.

Ontario is a perpetual leader in road safety and we're always looking for ways to make our roads even safer.

Excessive speed is a factor in nearly 23% of crashes involving large vehicles. We anticipate that speed limiters would improve this situation by capping the top speed of large trucks.

If passed, the legislation will make use of speed limiters on trucks mandatory. This built-in electronic device would cap the speeds of large trucks at 105 kilometres per hour. Most trucks built in this last decade already come equipped with this technology. This legislation would require that these devices be activated on Ontario roads.

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Our industry partners have shown strong support for speed limiters. The Ontario Trucking Association has stated that more than 50% of Ontario's trucks are already voluntarily using speed limiters. They realize that these devices help improve a truck's fuel economy, reduce greenhouse gas emissions and lower maintenance costs.

We are on the right track here. Not only would we enjoy cleaner air, but limiting truck speeds would also make our highways safer for everyone who shares the road with these vehicles—all of which contribute to a higher quality of life for all Ontarians.

I know all members of this House support measures that will protect the lives of Ontarians. This bill is exactly that kind of measure. Large trucks must operate at safe speeds and our friends and families need to get home safely. This legislation, if passed, would help save lives.

We are serious about improving our environment and we're committed to improving road safety, so I ask my colleagues to support this legislation and urge its passage. Let's work together to build a cleaner, greener and stronger Ontario.

**Mr. Michael A. Brown:** I'm pleased today to be able to speak to Bill 41 and thank Minister Bradley for his leadership on this important bill.

As the minister said earlier, our proposed legislative measures will, if enacted, help protect the environment and improve road safety through the mandatory use of speed limiters on large trucks. This is an opportunity for us to bring about cleaner air and safer roads for our friends and family. The government has heard the public's concerns about speeding trucks on Ontario highways that pollute our environment and create unnecessary risk for others. As we've heard before, the reality we face today is that over one third of Ontario's greenhouse gas emissions come from the transportation sector. About 84% of these emissions come from road transportation, including large trucks.

Ontario has been studying a mandatory speed limiter program for commercial vehicles for the last 18 months. Our research shows a potential for significant environmental and safety benefits from speed limiters. The legislation we are proposing, if passed, would make speed limiters on large trucks mandatory on Ontario roads. This built-in electronic device would cap the speed of trucks at 105 kilometres per hour for all trucks built after 1995. The vast majority of large trucks built within the last decade are already equipped with this technology. The new rules would apply to all trucks travelling on our roads and would include trucks from both Ontario and out of province.

Our proposed legislation would help Ontario achieve the goals set out in our Go Green action plan on climate change by decreasing fossil fuel consumption and greenhouse gas emissions and improving the quality of the air we breathe. Under this plan, our government has set a series of ambitious but achievable targets to reduce Ontario's greenhouse gas emissions by 6% below 1990 levels by the year 2014, 15% by the year 2020 and 80% below 1990 levels by the year 2050. We expect that initiatives aimed at reducing greenhouse gas emissions in the trucking industry could help us achieve 5% of Ontario's 2014 Go Green emissions reduction targets. By 2020, we anticipate that the improvements in the trucking industry will account for fully 6% of our goal.

If approved, speed limiters alone could deliver nearly half of these reductions. Speed limiters would join a number of important green initiatives already under way to help us meet our climate change goals, including:

—the green commercial vehicle project, a four-year, \$15-million pilot project to help businesses make the switch to greener, cleaner technologies such as hybrid power;

—our plan to build a network of more than 450 kilometres of high-occupancy vehicle lanes across the greater Golden Horseshoe over the next 25 years; it's an ongoing project to encourage car pooling and reduce traffic congestion on our province's highways;

—Move Ontario 2020, a \$17.5-billion plan to build more than 900 kilometres of rapid transit in the greater Toronto area and Hamilton, the largest transit investment of its kind in Canadian history; and

—more recently, the Next Generation Jobs Fund, a \$1.15-billion fund to support companies whose products reduce pollution and energy use.

A recent Transport Canada study has found that capping the speed of large trucks operating in Ontario at a maximum of 105 kilometres per hour would reduce greenhouse gas emissions by as much as 280,000 tonnes. This is the equivalent of taking 2,700 tractor trailers off the road each year.

It has also been estimated that speed limiters would save truckers an estimated 100 million litres of diesel fuel every year. With today's high fuel prices, this works out to a savings of \$116 million each year for Ontario's trucking industry, based on Transport Canada's report on the environmental benefits of speed limiters. In addition,



it has been estimated that speed limiters would reduce maintenance costs by reducing wear and tear on trucks. Savings like these are very important to the trucking industry, which is experiencing increasing challenges as a result of the downturn in the US economy.

Ontario's roads are amongst the safest in North America, and our government is committed to improving upon that record by always looking for new ways to make our highways safer.

Ontario has some of the most stringent truck safety laws in North America, including some of the highest fines and sanctions for commercial vehicle-related offences.

One of the ways that our government is improving truck safety is through our work to enhance commercial driver education school standards and commercial driver instructor licensing.

We will continue to work closely with the trucking industry to improve both overall truck safety and commercial driver behaviour.

While driver education is an extremely important part of our plan to enhance truck safety, speed limiters are another way we can help to prevent unsafe driving behaviours before they happen.

It is a well-known fact that speed has a direct relationship with the severity of injuries in a vehicle crash. Research shows that excessive speed is a factor in nearly 23% of crashes involving large vehicles.

Research also shows that by reducing the top speed of large trucks, we can greatly reduce the risk of a crash involving a truck travelling more than 105 kilometres per hour. This would also decrease the severity of crashes, if they do occur. In fact, for every one-kilometre-per-hour reduction in the speed of a vehicle, the risk of casualties as a result of a collision is reduced by 7%. In this way, speed limiters can help our government combat excessive speeding on our highways and its often very tragic results.

Back in March when the government first introduced our proposed legislation, we were supported in the House by a great number of stakeholders who have helped us develop this legislation to improve the environment and help keep our roads safe. These organizations include the Ontario Trucking Association, Pollution Probe, the Canadian Automobile Association, the Ontario Safety League, the Transportation Injury Research Foundation, the Transportation Health and Safety Association of Ontario, the Insurance Bureau of Canada, the Lung Association, Smart Risk and the Ontario Provincial Police. Each of these organizations is to be commended for the valuable input they have provided in getting us to where we are today.

Over the next several months, Ontario will continue to work with our stakeholders and counterparts across Canada to implement this proposed legislation.

The Ontario Trucking Association states that more than 50% of all the trucks on Ontario roads are already using speed limiters.

The American Trucking Association has also expressed its support for the proposed legislation and

claims that more than 80% of US carriers already voluntarily use speed limiters. The majority of this industry realizes that the use of speed limiters would increase a truck's fuel economy, reduce greenhouse gas emissions and lower maintenance costs.

**1600**

Large trucks must operate at safe speeds so our friends and families may get home safely. This legislation, if passed, will help save lives. It will help us breathe cleaner air. We are serious about improving our environment and we're committed to improving road safety. Let us tackle these issues together. Let's curb pollution by burning less fuel and reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Let's reduce collision rates. Let's promote safe driving. Let's keep our citizens safe on the roads.

So I ask my colleagues to support this legislation and I urge its passage. Let us work together to build a cleaner, greener and stronger Ontario.

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier):** Questions and comments?

**Mr. John O'Toole:** I'm pleased to respond, but I am waiting for our member from Newmarket-Aurora, Frank Klees, who was at one time the Minister of Transportation and hopefully in the future will reassume that role.

My point is that there are so many inconsistencies in this particular bill that we're certainly going to have to have hearings on it. I just want to raise a couple of issues.

They're talking about the environmental implications. I'd like the reports on those implications tabled. I think that's important, because most of the Move Ontario 2020 plan—actually, it's Move Ontario 2020 because that's about when the money starts being spent, in 2020. There are a lot of unanswered questions there, certainly.

The fuel savings is another issue in terms of the new technology, certainly with the new types of engines and new types of fuel. There are a lot of changes going on there, and also, I suspect, the interjurisdictional issues and the enforcement areas around that. But even in Ontario, if you look at the posted speed on the King's or Queen's highway, basically it says 100 kilometres an hour, not 105, so you get into the enforcement issues on that.

I would just say that even if you look at some of the licensing and training issues—there was a program on television which was highly critical, the auditor's report on some of the licensing and training issues. So much of what the member from Algoma-Manitoulin said is something we need to have a little deeper and more thorough discussion on.

But at the end of the time, I certainly am waiting—in fact, I'm attending here today primarily to hear Mr. Klees, who was the minister and is now the critic, because everyone here wants the roads to be safer. It's not an issue.

I don't know whether the OTA have bought a table at Dalton McGuinty's fundraiser or what, but the Ontario Trucking Association have certainly got the ear of the minister, if not the Premier of the province, and there are a lot of unanswered questions.



**Mr. Gilles Bisson:** I look forward, at about 5:30 this afternoon, to getting an opportunity to do the New Democratic Party leadoff on this particular bill, Bill 41.

I want to say, just quickly in passing, that I thought it was a little bit interesting—and this is meant in jocularly; please accept it for what it is—that my good friend from Algoma-Manitoulin was talking about speed limiters. I know, as a person who drives long distances in northern Ontario, that we've got to put them on our own vehicles. That would be a really good way of being able to reduce greenhouse gases and maybe make our highways a little bit safer. It's kind of funny listening to guys like us talking about speed limiters.

I would just say up front that we will support this legislation at second reading. We think it needs to get into committee. There are some problems. I think it was raised a little bit earlier in the sense that if we're talking about this as a green initiative, it seems to me that this is not in itself a green initiative. I think we need to bring together a more comprehensive plan. It certainly can be part of one. I wouldn't argue that it doesn't have any effect, but for the government to sell this as something that's going to green our environment amazingly—I don't think it's part of a bigger plan, and that's part of the problem.

The other thing is, I think we need to have a bit of discussion at the committee level of what this means to truckers. Yes, the trucking association has supported this, but I've gotten calls in my office from people in the trucking industry who have some legitimate concerns. For example, two trucks are driving down a twin highway with speed limiters of 105 kilometres and one is trying to overtake the other. Do you create a bottleneck on the highway? Does that create a safety impairment? Good question. There are other issues, such as: what happens if you're trying to speed up a truck and you put it out of gear? It will speed up going downhill, but you lose your Jake Brakes, which means to say you lose the ability to stop the truck safely coming down a hill.

So there are a number of issues that I think we need to talk about at the committee level to find out how we can strengthen this bill to make it do what needs to be done. As such, I think there are problems, and we need to fix them in committee.

**Ms. Laurel C. Broten:** I'm pleased to stand to lend my voice of support to Bill 41, An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act in relation to the use of speed-limiting systems in commercial motor vehicles. I am pleased to lend my support because this bill is good in terms of increased safety and it is good for the environment. As a result, Bill 41 has support from industry leaders, like the Ontario Trucking Association, and environmental groups, such as Pollution Probe, alike.

As we developed [gogreenontario.ca](http://gogreenontario.ca), it was clear that the transportation sector played a significant role in the contributions to greenhouse gas emissions. As has been said, one third of Ontario's greenhouse gas emissions come from the transportation sector and 84% of those from road emissions. So there clearly was a lot of room

for improvement and, as a result, opportunities to bring all hands on deck, and that's what we did as we developed Go Green Ontario.

We indicated that we took climate change very seriously and that all of us would have to take steps to make sure that every group was engaged and every sector came forward, whether that was through the work with HOV lanes, Move Ontario 2020, where \$17.5 billion was put on the table, the commercial vehicle pilot project or the auto sector's Next Generation of Jobs. In each of those instances, we reached out to groups that contribute and ensured that everyone understood that we all have a role to play.

We also reached out across generations, because many generations younger than those of us who are privileged to serve in this Legislature will actually be the ones who will be able to make that significant change to the way we live, to the way we work, to where we drive and how we undertake our daily business. That's what this is part of, and I'm very proud to stand in support of it.

**Mrs. Christine Elliott:** I appreciate the opportunity to add a few comments with respect to Bill 41 and the comments made by the Minister of Transportation as well as the member from Algoma-Manitoulin.

I would say, first of all, that it is an important bill. We do need to do something about speeding on our highways to end the carnage that we see, particularly as we enter the spring and summer holiday season. It is important that some action be taken. In fact, we thought it was so important that one of our members brought this forward last session as a private member's bill. The member for Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock brought this forward and was not successful, and now we see this repackaged as a government bill. But I suppose we shouldn't be surprised, because as the member from Newmarket-Aurora knows, the same thing happened with his private member's bill on street racing last session. That was not brought forward as a private member's bill but again was repackaged as a government bill, and it was only after the amendments that the member pushed for with respect to several important matters that weren't covered in the government legislation that it was finally passed.

So there we have it. We have another example of a bill that was originally the initiative of the Progressive Conservative Party that is now being claimed by the McGuinty Liberals.

I think it's important to hear the remarks that are going to be made by our critic the member from Newmarket-Aurora, because there are some significant issues with respect to this bill that I look forward to hearing his comments on. I think that will bring about, hopefully, a much more strengthened bill that is going to actually do what it was intended to do. So I look forward to his comments.

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier):** Response?

**Mr. Michael A. Brown:** I would like to thank the member for Durham, the member for Timmins-James Bay, my colleague from Etobicoke-Lakeshore and the



member for Whitby–Oshawa. I take your comments seriously.

This is an important bill. It does much for the environment. It will reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 280,000 tonnes. It is the equivalent of taking 2,700 tractor-trailers off the road each year. It will increase road safety. Research shows that excessive speed is a factor in 23% of all crashes.

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It will reduce the amount of diesel fuel required by 100 million litres in the province of Ontario, used by the trucking industry.

It is clearly an important bill on a number of levels.

I ask all members if they would seriously consider supporting this as we go forward. This is a bill I think we can all work together to make better, but it strikes an important chord in the Ontario fabric. It means to many Ontarians that our roads will be safer, that our environment will be better and that the air we breathe will be cleaner.

I just want to point out to some members that we are working with other jurisdictions across the country. We have the support of Lawrence Cannon, the Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities at the federal level. The province of Quebec has already moved with legislation. We are talking to them about harmonizing and working with them on regulations. And the province of Manitoba is also looking in the same direction.

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier):** Further debate?

**Mr. Frank Klees:** I look forward to the next hour of debate, when we'll have an opportunity to review various aspects of the legislation before us. I want at the very outset to thank my colleague Laurie Scott for her leadership on this issue. As has been said before by my colleague from Whitby–Ajax, I believe it was, Laurie Scott introduced a private member's bill that in large part addressed all of the issues that we have before us in the government Bill 41.

I would also say that no one on this side of the House will argue against the intent of making our roads safer. We do have an excellent track record, frankly, in the province of Ontario. On many fronts, we have led other jurisdictions in terms of bringing in safety legislation that has made our roads some of the safest roads in North America. As a former minister, I was pleased to be part of that. My colleague Norm Sterling, who's in the House, also a former Minister of Transportation, was also responsible for spearheading many road safety issues.

In fact, the former PC government brought in a considerable, very sizable legislation that dealt not only with issues of road safety but also with many of the underlying issues that lead to crashes, that lead to death on roads. One of those initiatives dealt with drinking and driving. The reason that we have the strongest drinking-and-driving legislation now in the province of Ontario is as a result of the initiative of the previous Progressive Conservative government, and I was pleased to be part of that.

With regard to this bill before us, essentially what it will do is require that commercial vehicles—I note with interest, though, that in the minister's opening remarks today, he did not use the term “commercial vehicles”; he specifically chose the words “large trucks.” I will be speaking to that because I'm assuming that there is a reason that the minister chose to use that term, and I'm not certain that that is necessarily in our best interests. But we'll deal with that.

I was disappointed that neither the minister in his remarks nor the parliamentary assistant made any reference to the issue of road safety from the standpoint of enforcement or of the mechanical condition of commercial vehicles.

Before we get into dealing with the specifics of this legislation, I want to address something that, without question, many people who are observing and following this debate will probably be asking themselves. That is, we already have speed limiters in Ontario. They're called speed limits. The very fact that we have to entertain this legislation in this House is an indication that we have failed along the way in a very big way. We've failed to enforce our speed limits in the province. We're somehow saying that we cannot hold drivers of those commercial vehicles accountable; we can't count on them to drive responsibly; we can't count on the industry to ensure that the people who get behind the wheels of the truck, the commercial vehicle, will conduct themselves in a way that will ensure that the speed at which they're travelling is a safe speed. So I think we have to address that issue before we deal with the specifics of this legislation.

It's easy to put something into a truck that will keep it from going faster, but if you're irresponsible in your driving, there are also ways you can manipulate that equipment. If someone wants to do something, they'll do it. I'm told by technicians that if you want to, you can break that 105-kilometres-per-hour speed limit notwithstanding the technology, notwithstanding the limiters.

So it gets back once again to the issue of what our speed limits are for in this province. I was speaking earlier today to Chief Armand La Barge, chief of police of the region of York. I wanted to get his opinion on the legislation before us and his advice in terms of the technology: Is it, in his opinion, a right step, an appropriate step, for government? The bottom line: Chief La Barge indicated to me that, yes, in the absence of responsible driving, in the absence of enforcement, in the absence of providing sufficient resources to forces such as his—the York Regional Police are able to actually be on the front lines, they're able to do the inspections and the enforcements and, in the absence of the judicial system, when one is actually charged, that the system, the court system, is there to process those charges and ensure that people experience the consequences of their action.

But you see, unfortunately none of that exists in this province. So because we failed on the enforcement side, here we are in this Legislature not properly resourcing our front-line police, not properly resourcing our judicial system, our courts, and we now have to debate how we



can somehow force, outside of personal responsibility, a speed limit within this province. In discussions with Chief La Barge, he pointed me to a media release that was issued today by his office. The timing was coincidental, but it was very timely because the York Regional Police conducted a three-day training session to familiarize their front-line officers with commercial motor vehicle safety violations and enforcement options.

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I would like to read into the record a portion of this release, because it speaks to the issue of road safety. It speaks to the issue of the responsibilities that we have as a Legislature with regard to the underlying cause of speeding, the underlying cause of road safety issues in our province. The release reads as follows:

"The course, which was conducted between April 2 and 4, 2008, was delivered by York Regional Police certified motor vehicle inspectors. It consisted of a classroom segment and two days of road enforcement under the supervision of the inspectors. Topics included the weight requirements of commercial vehicles, paperwork required and identifying safety defects while checking these vehicles.

"A total of 26 York Regional Police officers and one Ontario Provincial Police officer received this training. During the two-day enforcement portion of the training, officers were strategically deployed in four groups across York region. A total of 517 trucks were inspected, 262 Provincial Offences Act notices were issued, including charges for insecure loads, mechanical defects, improper licences and document violations.

"One driver was arrested for being under suspension and obtaining a driver's licence from another jurisdiction, while two other drivers were arrested for possession of a controlled substance. Six drivers were found to be operating commercial motor vehicles, while their drivers' licences were suspended, and a total of 16 vehicles were removed from the road for mechanical defects."

The reason I wanted to bring this release to the attention of the Legislature and specifically the minister is that I'm concerned that we're focusing very narrowly through this legislation on an issue that, under the guise of dealing with road safety, will somehow be the silver bullet, and that somehow, by requiring the industry to install these speed limiters, we are getting to the heart of what the real problem is. This government has been very good at doing precisely that: to introduce legislation, make announcements, have a very flashy press conference and take the applause from the general public because they're seen to be doing something. And yet, all too often the underlying issue is never addressed.

I would suggest, and would ask the minister, to give very serious consideration to seeing this as a beginning to deal in a very serious way with the issue of commercial motor vehicle safety in this province.

All we have to do is take a look at the York Regional Police experience over the course of a few days, and a very quick calculation tells us that one out of two commercial vehicles is unsafe. They are either unsafe when it

comes to mechanical issues or they're being driven by someone who isn't appropriately licensed. We can put a speed limit on a truck and limit that truck's speed to 105 or to 80, but if the truck is not mechanically fit, it will do nothing for the safety of our roads. So while this is a step—and that's all it is; it's a first step—I believe that it's incumbent upon this government to ensure that they don't stop here.

In fact, I will be looking for confirmation from the minister that he will agree to public hearings before moving on with this legislation. The reason I think public hearings are very important is that it will, first of all, help us all to better understand the implications of what is being proposed. It will also give stakeholders an opportunity to come forward, because there are those who are opposing this legislation. There are those who feel that it will put them at a competitive disadvantage, particularly many of the independent truckers.

In fact, during debate, it was very interesting that the member from Davenport—I was looking at the records of debate from my colleague's private member's bill, and it was interesting that in the course of that debate, the very issues that I believe are going to be raised by many stakeholders were referenced by Mr. Tony Ruprecht from Davenport. I'd like to just quote him for the record, because this is a Liberal member of the Legislature who, no doubt, will be expected to support this legislation. He asks some very good questions that I believe we need public hearings on and the setting of a public hearing so that we can deal with those questions, answer them and ensure that if there are amendments that are required to improve this legislation, we take into consideration the wisdom of that advice.

Mr. Ruprecht made this comment: "I have a trucking company in my riding and I asked, 'In what way would this specific private member's bill affect you?'" He went on to relay how his constituent talked about the fact that they have shipments to make to parts of Georgia and that they are in competition with other trucking companies. He talked about the fact that this kind of technology—speed limiters—because they go into different jurisdictions where in fact the speed limits are different than speed limits here in Ontario, it may well put them at a disadvantage. These are questions that we have to discuss in the course of our deliberations.

I would also point to the fact that while the industry is supporting this in large part, we can't in this province forget that there are independent business people who don't have the ability to compete with some of the bigger players. We always have to be sensitive to ensuring that whether it's the legislation we introduce or how it's being introduced—and this is where we will want to hear from the government and have some discussion in terms of how this legislation will be phased in, over what period of time—that we have the appropriate sensitivities to the issues that various truckers face in this province.

1630

I also believe that we have to look very seriously at an issue that is raised many times by people who travel our



province, and that is the conduct of the drivers themselves. I think the issue of the discipline of lane changes—we've all experienced what it's like not only to have truckers who speed and intimidate those of us who are driving cars, but then how they conduct themselves on the road, like hugging the passing lane so that people are frustrated in terms of being able to pass, and then people take chances. These are all circumstances that I believe the industry has a responsibility to address.

With regard to the minister's remarks when he referred to large trucks as opposed to commercial vehicles, I would ask the minister whether it's his opinion that commercial buses should also be included in this category. I think that while we agree that the speed limits are there for all of us, when you have a large vehicle, a heavy vehicle, travelling at high speeds, the results of a crash are considerably more deadly than with smaller vehicles. If the government has the intention of excluding commercial bus vehicles, we will be very interested to know what the justification is for that. If it's good for large trucks, then perhaps it's also good for commercial buses. These are issues that we will again be asking representation to be made on at committee; it will give us an opportunity to discuss those issues.

The question that is raised is, if in fact the trucking industry is so much in support of this, then why do we need legislation? If it's a good thing, if, as the parliamentary assistant indicated earlier, all of the major stakeholders are there, then it should really be left to the industry, perhaps, to self-regulate—and it's happening now. The reality is that, I'm told, probably in excess of 60%, maybe even 70%, of trucks travelling our highways today already have activated speed limiters. If that's the case, perhaps rather than legislate, we should be looking at working with the industry to self-regulate on this issue. The answer, of course, is simple, and that is that while it's a good idea, very similar to helmets for bicycles or seat belts in cars, while you get perhaps a majority of people agreeing, complying and being responsible, there are always those who won't—and for that reason you need the hammer of the law to force them into compliance.

Having said that, we have speed limits, as I said earlier in the debate. Those are laws that are very clear, and we still have people who are ignoring those laws. I'm going to ask this question of the government: If you can't enforce speed limits, how will you enforce this legislation? What is it that you will do differently about enforcing this legislation as compared to enforcing the speed limits in our province? This government does not have a good record when it comes to providing resources. It has an excellent record of being able to introduce a lot of legislation, but the question that we ask is: What will you do to ensure that that legislation is meaningful, that it will actually make a difference in our day-to-day lives, that it will have the desired results of the objective?

I was speaking with my colleague Garfield Dunlop, someone who has a passion for community safety and for supporting our front-line police officers in this province,

someone who stands in this House often in debate and expresses his frustration at what seems to be empty rhetoric on the part of this government for supporting—whether it be the OPP or whether it be our community policing. He tells me that Ottawa has committed \$156 million to policing over five years for 1,000 new police officers in Ontario, and we welcome that commitment by Ottawa. Five hundred of these officers will be OPP, and they will be covering off highway patrol.

This is why we're so concerned: Up until very recently, this government did not sign on to the program, although the money was on the table. They did finally sign, but it's apparent that nothing will be done this year, and perhaps nothing will be done next year. Even though they have put their signature to the document and to the commitment, we have yet to see action. I know that my colleague will continue to put pressure on this government to work with Ottawa to ensure that community safety is in fact a priority. This province should be putting in the money especially for the 500 new OPP officers this year, and we'll be very careful to examine their actions in that regard.

I want to move on to another issue, and that deals with the issue of speeding trucks and just how important that is. Speaker, I can't tell you the number of times that I have heard from constituents who have shared with me close calls. They are wondering why they are being subjected to the kind of intimidation on the highways that they are. And yet we hear from the industry—and I have a great deal of respect for the trucking industry in this province. There are many, many responsible truckers, many responsible companies, many responsible individuals who are involved in this industry. But how do we deal with those who are not complying?

I revert again to the report from Chief Armand La Barge, the experience that they had in their safety blitz, when one out of two trucks in this province was found to either have a safety defect or have a driver who was not qualified or was improperly licensed. That is a condemnation, and it is a signal to the industry that we have to get serious about ensuring that, first of all, the drivers are qualified and the equipment is safe. And it's a signal to this government that we're not doing enough to enforce the standards that we already have in place. I recall from my time as minister, when reviewing the standards, that I was told—I have no reason to disbelieve this—that we have some of the highest safety standards for our roads anywhere in any jurisdiction. If that's the case, then again, how is it that we continue to have the incidents on our highways that we do, and how is it that we continue to have these reports such as I read into the record?

1640

Chief La Barge also shared with me the results of 2007. I point out that this is only within York region; this is not province-wide. In York region last year, out of 2,261 inspections of commercial vehicles, there were 997 charges; 602 vehicles were taken out of service. I say to the minister, when you look at those numbers and when



you listen to the industry tell you about the sense of responsibility they have towards public safety and towards safety within their industry, I would ask you to confront them with these numbers and ask the question: Where does this come from and what is it that we can do? According to these numbers, just within York region about 27% to 30% of all of the commercial vehicles we see shouldn't be on the road. That means that every day we travel those roads, every day that our families travel on those roads, 30% of the vehicles that pass them or are beside them are unsafe and are potential causes for a crash, an injury or a death.

Will this limiter solve that problem? The fact that a vehicle now has a mechanism that will ensure that that driver can't go more than 105 kilometres an hour—is that going to solve that problem? I suggest to you, Minister, no. It may solve the problem for the other 70%, but probably that's the 70% who are already complying. Those are probably those drivers and those companies and those members of the Ontario Trucking Association who have the standards, and all of those members have agreed that they would comply and support and conduct themselves responsibly. That's probably where they are. So now I would ask: What good will it do to put a limiter into a vehicle that is otherwise unsafe? Whether you're driving that vehicle at 80 kilometres an hour or 105 or 120, if it's unsafe, it's unsafe to drive. That's where we need to put our focus.

I would hope that in the course of our public hearings, we would hear from the industry on this very point: What is it we have to do to get buy-in? What is it we have to do to ensure there are consequences for those who don't? Because there will always be those who don't. And in the same way that we spoke earlier today about the blitz relating to school buses, where even though the ministry release—the ministry release stated “Ontario School Buses Get Top Grades” and then went on to tell us that in the course of a two-week blitz, 92 buses had minor repair orders issued, and 12—yes, 12—buses were pulled off the road. The plates were taken off; they weren't allowed to drive another inch. Why? Because when the inspection took place, it was determined that they were absolutely unsafe. Those were 12 buses where our young people, children in this province, were delivered to their door in the morning by their parents with the assumption, the presumption, that their children would be safe when they got into that bus.

I know it wasn't the minister's doing, the writing of this press release, and I have a sense that perhaps the minister didn't even look at the top line, because I can't imagine that he would have agreed. With a result like that, he would not have agreed to say, “Ontario School Buses Get Top Grades.” That's not a top grade. A top grade, after a two-week blitz, would have been that not one single bus would have been found to be unsafe, because in this province, under this government and under that minister, no child should ever step on to a bus that's found to be unsafe.

But what is the issue? The issue is that all too often we try to spin the news, and that's what happened here.

What happened here is, the government knew there was a problem. They conducted the blitz and they found the problem confirmed. But then what you don't want to do is put out a release and say, “Disaster Looms. Serious Problems in School Busing.” So you try to say, “Well, we're going to give them a top grade anyway, even though there are students at risk.”

I have a feeling that after today the minister will do whatever is necessary to ensure that proper steps and very clear steps are taken to address this issue of school buses, that very practical measures will be taken, that there will be consequences for those who are found not to be in compliance with those safety measures.

As I said to the minister during question period today, what I would like to see is the name of every operator who was found not to be in compliance with safety measures, that they be published. I think every parent deserves to know whether the bus that their child gets on is being operated by someone who is responsible, and I think every school district has the right to know that the people they are contracting with for school bus services are responsible.

Quite frankly, I think that people who don't have the sense of responsibility to ensure that our children are safe should be out of the business. There's no room for taking risks with our kids, and there are alternatives. The alternatives are the responsible players, and that's who should have the business, but those responsible players should also have sufficient funding to ensure that they can comply with the safety measures. This is an issue that the government has been weaving out and making excuses about for the last number of years.

Once again, even within the last budget, there is a huge gap between what is needed for transportation within our school system for those hundreds of thousands of kids and what the government is actually transferring in terms of funding for busing. Even then, school boards are forced to rob Peter to pay Paul. We hear the stories of school boards being forced to take money out of transportation to put it into some of the other categories.

In speaking with school bus operators, I have been told consistently for the last number of years that we are coming to a crisis, that we can't continue to shortchange transportation and expect the safety measures to be complied with, because compromises are going to be made somewhere and, unfortunately, that may well result in injury, if not death. It's a wake-up call to this government.

With regard to the environmental issues that the minister and the parliamentary assistant refer to, without question it's very clear that when you slow down the speed, whether it's a car or a truck, we're going to reduce greenhouse gases. We're all in support of that, and any measure that we can take with regard to that, we will, of course, support.

1650

I find it interesting. The former Minister of the Environment was speaking rather eloquently in support of this legislation for this very reason. The question I have is,



while you were environment minister, what is it that you did, if you feel so passionately about this issue? Here is an interesting piece of information that the environment minister would know and that I'm sure, Speaker, you know. That is that the amount of greenhouse gas emissions from one lawn mower is more than from idling 40 cars for the same period of time. Isn't that amazing? I found it amazing. So what are we doing about the lawn mowers? Forty cars; one lawn mower—more emissions. The Minister of the Environment gave us a Flick Off campaign as her contribution to the environmental legacy that she left us.

Does the general public think these limiters are a good idea? From what I understand, all of the research shows that 79% of the respondents believe that mandatory speed limiters would improve public safety. It makes sense, as I've said before, in terms of some of the logic behind this. Anything that can be done to reduce emissions, we will, of course, support.

The issue that I think we need to address as well is, what are the costs to the industry? Perhaps one of the strategies of the government is to ensure that greenhouse gases are reduced by the fact that we have fewer people driving to and from work. Some 190,000 jobs have been lost in the manufacturing sector, and there are manufacturing plants that have shut down, so I'm sure that at some point the government will probably lay claim to that as well.

I would ask the minister in his response to confirm for us today that we will have public hearings on this bill before he brings it forward for third reading. I would ask the minister to agree to being open to amendments relating to some of the issues that will be brought forward. I would ask that the minister be sensitive to that aspect of the industry that will require some time, some phasing in of these provisions. Finally, I would ask that the minister secure a commitment from his cabinet to ensure that the appropriate resources are available to enforce this legislation so that we don't once again go through a process of simply implementing legislation that has all of the trappings, but in the final analysis will not make any difference to road safety.

I would also look forward to the minister taking on the responsibility to address the issue of commercial vehicle safety in the broader sense, that we go beyond this legislation, that we look at the results, for example, of the safety blitz that Chief La Barge conducted in York region—I'll share that information with the minister—and understand that we have a serious problem in this province with road safety.

My final remark to the minister is that when all is said and done with regard to these various steps that we can take, one area that he's directly responsible for is the condition of our highways. If we're concerned about road safety, then I would ask him, when he gets back to his office later on today, to ask for an update on the condition of our 400-series highways and the potholes that I believe can cause, and are causing, serious problems. I say this to him from personal experience, having driven

from Toronto to London and back just a couple of weeks ago. I consider myself a careful driver. There were a number of occasions when I had to avoid a pothole, and in doing so, quite frankly, caused some angst in terms of what the potential was if someone hit that pothole at 100 kilometres per hour—not only the accident or the crash that can be caused as a result of that, but the resulting cost as well and damage to the vehicles. That's a simple directive on the part of the ministry to get on with prioritizing the post-winter results and the damage that was done to our highways.

I believe that we will be supporting this legislation for second reading. Second reading is always support in principle. We believe that anything we can do to enhance safety on our roads, we should take on that responsibility. It is something that has been done in many other jurisdictions.

I would have preferred to have this as a national initiative, so that we don't have the issue of different standards for different provinces. I know that there are ongoing discussions with the federal government and that a study is being conducted, but the timing concerns me in that we're moving ahead; I know that Quebec already has. But nevertheless, most of our Canadian traffic is cross-jurisdictional. I believe that it would have been in the interest of the industry to have this as national legislation as opposed to simply each province having to deal with it independently.

Having said that, we look forward to further debate. We look forward to further information coming forward. As I said previously, we look forward to the public hearings, which I hope either the minister or his parliamentary assistant can confirm in their response.

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier):** Questions and comments.

**Mr. Lou Rinaldi:** It's a real pleasure to add my comments on Bill 41 to those of the member from the opposition. Mr. Speaker, as you probably know, I live in eastern Ontario, or the eastern part of Ontario, just east of Durham, and I do a lot of Highway 401 east of here to get home. I think what we're doing here, putting those speed limiters on trucks, is a great, fantastic step to improve the safety on the 401.

On the day of the budget, I drove home from here. We had an enormous snowstorm. If anybody drives the 401, at least east of Toronto after 8 o'clock at night, they'll know the cars are outnumbered by probably 5 to 1 or 10 to 1, trucks to cars. Considering the condition of the weather that day, it wasn't very safe.

I know the drivers are professionals; I have a lot of respect for them. But I think when you're driving one of those big trucks, one of those big rigs—as we all know, speed kills. So anything that we could control to have safer highways is a step in the right direction.

1700

One of the comments from a speaker from the opposition was, "You know, if the industry supports this, why would we be introducing legislation?" Well, the industry does support it, but you know and I know that industry is



not always 100%. There is always that individual who tends not to abide by the rules; same as when the speed limit is set, not everybody abides by the speed limit. So this is really to reassure that those trucks are controlled all at the same limit. I look for this legislation to move forward.

**Ms. Sylvia Jones:** I'm pleased to respond to the member for Newmarket–Aurora. As always, our Progressive Conservative transportation critic again has raised some excellent points that need to be considered when we debate Bill 41.

In my riding of Dufferin–Caledon, we've had a number of terrible tragedies on our roads. As with all tragedies, many rumours circulated after the road deaths about the training and experience of the drivers. Therefore, I would like to ensure that speed limiters are not the only aspect to ensure road safety in Ontario. Increased policing, monitoring, truck safety enforcement blitzes, regulation and monitoring of driving schools are also important points to consider.

I'd also like to remind members that the actual speed limit is not stated in the proposed legislation. We are being asked to trust the government that regulations will set the 105 kilometres per hour. I would be much more comfortable if this proposed legislation stated clearly which commercial vehicles would be affected and that the speed limit of 105 kilometres per hour was set in the legislation, as opposed to the regulations.

Based on these issues, I would hope that the government would allow public hearings to allow these important amendments that we have raised today to be discussed in committee.

**Mr. Gilles Bisson:** I just want to say that I listened to many of the points that were made by the honourable member. Some of them I could agree on, and I'm sure that people are going to be looking forward to my leadoff speech that will happen in 10 minutes.

**Mr. Michael A. Brown:** I listened very carefully to my friend across the way—a very good intervention, I believe. He was the Minister of Transportation in a former government. I will say that he was of assistance to me on some of the projects that were going on in my particular constituency and I appreciate that.

I want to assure him, however, that the primary focus of this piece of legislation is an environmental one. What we are proposing to do is to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in Ontario by 280,000 tonnes per year. That is significant. That's the equivalent of taking 2,700 trucks off the road. We expect that just doing the speed limiters will help Ontario achieve 2% of our 2014 greenhouse gas emissions reduction, will reduce them by that much.

We know that this will also increase road safety. We know that excessive speed is a problem in 23% of all road crashes. We know that traffic surveys done here in the province, at three locations, showed that between 30% and 60% of large trucks today—on the 400 series, that is—are travelling at speeds in excess of 105 kilometres. We believe that it is now time to limit the speed that these vehicles are going for environmental reasons and for safety reasons.

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier):** Response?

**Mr. Frank Klees:** I appreciate my colleagues' comments. I just want to restate for the record that while I appreciate the objective, both from a road safety standpoint as well as the environmental objectives that the government has, there is a much bigger issue that we have to deal with. The parliamentary assistant refers to the excessive speeds that are being travelled and that's why we need the speed limiters. The reality is that there are excessive speeds that are being travelled by cars as well. Are we going to do that for cars? If it's good for trucks, why is it not good for cars? He knows the answer, I believe; we all know the answer. The issue here is not that the answer is speed limiters. The answer is to put an end to speeders, and the way you do that is to ensure that the speed limits that we have in this province are properly enforced and that there are consequences in place for people who break the law.

While it's difficult for me to stand here and say I will oppose this legislation, I will say that to put this legislation in place without also addressing the core issue, the fundamental issue, that we have in this province, and that is a lack of enforcement—and perhaps it's time for the minister, concurrently, to ask the question, "What are the right speed limits that we should have in place in this province for the road conditions that we have?" Then let's put in place a system of enforcing those limits and ensuring that the resources are there for our police services to do so.

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier):** Further debate?

**Mr. Gilles Bisson:** Don't change your dial. Stay tuned. We're on the channel. Just keep watching. I'm here. As the guy used to say on Bugs Bunny, "Feast your eyes"—what was that again, the rooster? Anyway, nobody understands. I guess it's one of those metaphors I just kind of forgot.

I want to say, you don't know how much I was looking forward to speaking on this bill. I was sitting here with great anticipation. I was getting anxious inside because I thought to myself, "This is going to be an opportunity to speak about one of Mr. Bradley's bills. Mr. Bradley is the dean of the Legislature, along with, I believe, Mr. Sterling, and I'm always pleased to speak after Mr. Bradley. He's just a class guy. Even though he and I don't serve in the same party, we do serve in the same Legislature, and I'm always pleased to speak opposite to anything he may—we used to speak together at one time when he was in the opposition, but that's a whole other thing.

Bill 41: Here we are. We're going to be debating today, at second reading, a bill that puts in place speed limiters on trucks in the province of Ontario. The government is saying that this is part of a green plan, that this is one of the ways that we can lessen our footprint on the environment, by reducing the amount of diesel used in trucks by limiting the speed. Nobody's going to argue for one second that it doesn't have the effect of doing



that. But come on, give me a break, Mr. Bradley, Mr. Minister of Transportation. This is not a green plan. This is one stand-alone piece of legislation that, yes, will have a positive impact, but let's not put this out to be part of a green plan in the province of Ontario, because that's something we don't have.

That's something that I believe, and I think most New Democrats and most citizens who are interested in the environment would believe, we should have. The province should put together a plan that looks across all ministries, and which says that the Ministry of Transportation, the Ministry of Natural Resources, the Ministry of the Environment, the Ministry of Agriculture and Food—all of them—through their ministers and through cabinet committee and others, should look at how the province can make itself greener by way of changing some of the ways that we do things within the province of Ontario, everything from the issue of how we can utilize technologies more effectively so that we're able to lessen our reliance on energy, looking at ways of being able to reduce greenhouse gases, and also how we can change consumers.

This is one of the points that I just want to say here very quickly, in passing. I believe that if you're going to have a huge impact on being able to green our planet, make us less reliant on energy etc., we need to find a way to engage consumers, because at the end of the day that's what's going to drive it. I believe, for example, with energy, if we're serious about saying we want to reduce the amount of electricity that is being used off the Ontario hydro grid so we don't have as much of a reliance on nuclear power and on coal and other gas-fired plants in the province, if the consumer had the choice of being able to buy appliances that were in some way offset by way of some sort of a tax credit or some sort of a scheme by Ontario Hydro itself, consumers would choose to do that.

But here's the problem. We all know, for example, the argument about the energy-efficient fridge. You can, if you want, buy an energy-efficient fridge, and we know they're about 40% to 50% more efficient than what is out there currently. This is going to relate to this point. But why is it that consumers are not buying to a larger degree? Because many people can't afford to; it's as simple as that. The amount of money they save in energy bills isn't going to offset fast enough the initial cost. Why don't we, as a province, say, "Let's engage consumers the same way we engage people who buy vehicles and people who drive on our highways. How do we engage consumers so that they can make the right choices, so that they themselves can become greener and effectively green our environment?"

1710

I think there are a number of ways of doing that. For example, what's wrong with going to a system that says, "If you buy an energy-efficient fridge, it's financed through your bill from Hydro One," or whoever you might be dealing with, and then you use the savings from the energy you're not paying for to pay off your fridge

over a period of time, and maybe a little bit more? Or maybe you can even kick in a bit of a tax credit from the province of Ontario. That would give consumers the ability to make that choice. It's the same thing with this. We talk about this as part of a green plan. We say in Bill 41 that putting speed limiters on our trucks is going to make our highways safer and our environment greener, but we're only putting it on trucks. What about cars? There's probably just as much, if not more, pollution emitted by vehicles driving down our freeways and our roads across this province than there is by the trucking industry. We're saying that we want to make ourselves greener. How do you allow the consumer to make that choice to become greener?

Some people will argue, "Heck, the price of gas today is going to help the consumer get greener. Who can afford to fill up their Ford F-150"—as I do at \$150 a pop—"or whatever other kind of vehicle you're driving?" The reality is that we're probably selling just as many SUVs today in our marketplace as we were two years ago, when the price of gas was a lot less. We need to find ways of engaging consumers so that there is some sort of financial payoff for them, and there's also an issue of getting them engaged in the process of how consumers themselves can make some choices around energy efficiency.

Even moi, little old me in northern Ontario, driving on Highway 11: How do you ensure that I'm not going faster than I should, in order to save the amount of fuel used, not only from the perspective of the dollars out of my pocket to buy gas but from that of the emissions into the atmosphere? The only way it could be done now is by the persons choosing to do it themselves. I'm just saying we need to have some mechanisms that would help us engage consumers in a practice that, at the end of the day, could make our environment greener.

I say to the government across the way, just on that point, that I'm all for making the atmosphere a better place for all of us to breathe in, as far as greenhouse gas emissions. But I'm also very conscious of the fact that this in itself is not a green plan; it's only one part of what could be a green plan if the government decided to put it forward.

Let's look at the legislation for what it is and what it's trying to do. I want to say up front, as the critic from the New Democratic caucus, that we will be supporting this legislation at second reading. We think it's a step in the right direction—

*Applause.*

**Mr. Gilles Bisson:** —but—stop your applause.

**Hon. James J. Bradley:** However—

**Mr. Gilles Bisson:** However, there are some issues that need to be addressed. Some of the issues that were raised with us in calls, letters and e-mails that I got—I wouldn't say "letters", actually; I haven't got any letters on this. But I got e-mails and phone calls from people out there who have been sort of paying attention to this debate on Bill 41 with regard to speed limiters.

Here are a couple. One of the things that has been raised to me by others is that we as a country need to deal



with this more effectively. It can't just be Ontario and Quebec. If we're going to be competitive as a jurisdiction in North America and it's only Ontario and Quebec doing it—because we know that Quebec has already passed similar legislation. We know that Ontario's got legislation in the Legislature and, should we pass it, we would be two jurisdictions at about the same time with this type of legislation. One of the points raised is, what about the entire issue of inter-Canadian transport and transport from Canada into the United States and vice versa? If you have jurisdictions within Ontario and within Canada that have one set of rules, but everybody else operates differently, it's going to make an uneven playing field and it may in some cases affect trade. Some of the arguments put before me are that we should be doing this, but we should be doing all we can to encourage other jurisdictions in Canada to do the same so that at least, if you're in the Canadian trucking industry and you're driving from Vancouver all the way to Halifax, or from Pelee Island all the way to Cochrane—because you can't make it to Moosonee since you've got to get on a train; I was going to say "Moosonee"—you basically have the same rules. Your rules are somewhat similar, and there are the speed limiters across the country. It's not that you drive out of Manitoba and all of a sudden you don't need a speed limiter, but you drive into Ontario and you do.

Here are some of the problems. For example, the truck that's driving from Manitoba coming into Ontario will have to have a speed limiter by law. A truck leaving the United States and driving into Ontario will have to have a speed limiter by law. One of the issues that has been raised to me by e-mail is that a lot of trucks that are doing long-distance cartage, let's say from New York state to Alberta, may choose not to go through Ontario because they themselves from the point of origin don't have speed limiters, so they may very well decide to bypass Ontario altogether. That may or may not be a good thing, depending on your perspective. Some would say it's a good thing because it's less wear and tear on our highways. On the other hand, the people who sell fuel, operate restaurants etc., mechanical shops along the route, stand to lose. One of the arguments is that this is a bit difficult within the North American context, and I think they're making some legitimate arguments. I don't think we should make that an impediment and do nothing, but we need to think this through.

We're currently saying in this law that if you have a truck that originates outside of Ontario, you're going to have to have a speed limiter on your truck if you want to come into the province of Ontario. That might put some companies—and, I would probably argue, not so much companies—and individual truck owners at a disadvantage, and they may choose not to do business through Ontario because of this. The problem now becomes, "I live in Manitoba and want to transport goods into Ontario. I have to have a speed limiter that cannot be tampered with. So I now drive into Ontario at 105 kilometres on the speed limiter, no problem," but they get on

the interstate driving into the States or the TransCanada going back west, and now they've got a speed limiter and they have to cruise at 105 while the speed limits in some of those places might actually be higher and they may be put at a disadvantage competitively with their neighbour.

The example that was given to me is that for the people who originate in Ontario, trucking firms in Ontario, who pick up loads in Ontario and bring them down to Tennessee, Texas or wherever it might be, those interstates in many cases have more than 105 kilometres posted as the speed limit, so they may be at a financial disadvantage competing with the American trucking company because you pick up the load in Ontario, get across the United States and you're having to drive a little bit slower.

Now, there are some holes in that argument, I understand. I've been around here long enough to know that you can argue a few other points on that argument, but I think it's one that's a legitimate concern, and we need to respond to those people who want answers to those types of questions. That's why I believe this bill has to go to committee for a bit to allow people in the industry to come and speak to us about the practicalities of having a provincial law apply to a truck that may only be transiting across Ontario.

How do you deal with the Ontario truck that picks up a load in Ontario and then goes out of Ontario into the United States or somewhere else where the speed limit will be more than 105 kilometres an hour and they're prevented by their own speed limiter from Ontario from driving at the speed limit in that other jurisdiction? I think it's an interesting point and one we'd have to think about at committee to see if there is a way of being able to deal with that.

One of the other things that was raised with me was the whole issue of what happens as far as passing. Many of the highways in our province are two-lane highways where you have either a passing lane on a single-lane highway or a dual-lane highway system. One of the things that people have raised in their e-mails to me is, what do you do when you've got one truck doing 100 kilometres an hour or 95 kilometres an hour and the other truck in behind decides that he or she wants to overtake that slower-moving truck that's doing somewhat less than 105? You're going to end up in a situation where you're going to box people in behind those two trucks.

**Mr. Khalil Ramal:** That's against the law.

**Mr. Gilles Bisson:** Sure. The member says that boxing people in is against the law, but if you're legally overtaking another truck—you're in truck A and I'm in truck B. Let's say truck A is driving at 100 kilometres an hour, and truck B wants to run at 105 because of whatever load they're running—

**Mr. Lou Rinaldi:** But the speed limit is 100.

**Mr. Gilles Bisson:** Oh yeah, and everybody follows the speed limit. Come on; give me a break.

1720

**Mr. Lou Rinaldi:** But you're supposed to.

**Mr. Gilles Bisson:** Hang on a second. Let me make the point, all right? The point I'm making is this: One



truck is driving 100 and the other is driving 105, and he decides that he wants to overtake. One of the problems you have is that the action of overtaking the other vehicle will take that much longer. One of the arguments raised is that you want that person to overtake the vehicle and get out of the way so that they're not boxing in traffic behind them and making people impatient, who may otherwise then take risky chances when it comes to themselves in their own cars to overtake the trucks. The point is, you may end up in a situation where people who are similar in speeds are going to try to overtake each other and are blocking our highways for a longer period of time.

It's the same thing if you get up on Highway 11 or Highway 17, where we only have passing lanes. See, the thing is, Ontarians—

*Interjection.*

**Mr. Gilles Bisson:** You all drive at 90 kilometres an hour? I'm going to believe that? I want you guys to swear that on a stack of Bibles right now. Come on.

Now, you get up into Highway 11 and you've got the truck, and let's say we make the argument that my friend across the way makes, that nobody speeds. So you're on Highway 11 and the person is doing 90 kilometres an hour or 85 kilometres an hour, and you get the one truck in behind that says, "I don't want to do 85 anymore; I want to do 90 and overtake that truck in front of me." There's one passing lane for maybe two or three kilometres. How long is it going to take for that truck to pass the next truck? It's basically going to block people in behind. So what are the cars in the back going to do? The cars in the back are going to say, "Them trucks are nothing but a pain. I'm going to do everything humanly possible to get by this truck while I've got a chance." They will cut corners and take chances. That's the point people are making. I think it's a legitimate concern.

We need to think through the issue of overtaking, because every now and then, if you need to overtake somebody, you may need to have the speed to get out of the way to allow other traffic to go by you. It's already enough of an issue, especially on single-lane highways like Highway 11 or 17, where you've only got passing lanes every 15 or 20—I wouldn't even say that; passing lanes are probably more like 50 kilometres apart. It can become a very serious situation. So I'm just saying, from the perspective of safety, we might be biting off our nose to spite our face.

I'm not arguing for one second that we shouldn't do this. I'm just saying that it's a legitimate concern. It's something we need to think about. It might be a little bit less of an issue on a 400 highway. I would even argue that where the 401 is twin-laned, it may be a bit less of an issue, but on single-lane highways, this can become a problem, because it's already a problem.

I know myself, as all of you do, that as you drive on Highway 11 or 17 or any other roadway in the province of Ontario, passing lanes are sometimes few and far between, and you've been sitting behind four or five transport trucks for the last 50 kilometres and you want to get by them. All of a sudden, one of those five decides

that he or she is going to overtake the next truck, and you're stuck in behind. Knowing that, people are going to take chances. They'll pass improperly and we actually could put drivers at risk. So I think it's something that we need to look at.

One of the e-mails that I got was actually—I never thought of this. I thought, "It's amazing." We get all this information from people by way of e-mails, and I thought that it was quite an interesting one from a gentleman out of Sudbury, who said that in many cases, the way that you bypass the speed limiter—I don't know if this is true; this is what I'm being told—is that on a hill, you can put your truck into neutral and the weight of the truck and the momentum will allow you to go past 105. It might be one of the places where somebody decides to overtake somebody, right—this whole argument of the truck standing in behind. The problem is that if you take the truck out of gear and put it in neutral, you no longer have any Jake brakes. They use power to slow these trucks down. They don't use the actual "rubber hitting the road" kind of brake; they're power brakes, called Jake brakes. If you have it in neutral, your Jake brake doesn't work. So if the truck is using the hill as an advantage to pick up speed to pass somebody—because that's the only way you're going to be able to do it—taking it into neutral will knock out the Jake brake. And what happens? If you can't get it back into gear on time, you may actually have an unsafe situation.

I thought, "I'm not a trucker. I don't pretend to know if this is true or not." But this gentleman from Sudbury sent me this particular e-mail, and I know the hills that he talks about because I've driven those particular hills on some of those highways—on Highway 144 and others. If that's an issue, I think it's something we need to think about. It's something a committee will have to take a look at.

So those are a few of the concerns that I've gotten from the trucking industry. The issue of passing: You may need to have a bit of extra power in order to pass somebody properly, to get out of the way to allow other traffic to transit. There's the whole other issue of making sure that we look at other jurisdictions so we don't put ourselves into a position where we become uncompetitive as a result of our own legislation. Also, there's the whole issue of the Jake brakes that I raised just now.

Also, as I said at the very beginning, and I just want to repeat this, the government can't pretend that this is a green initiative in and of itself. It's only part of something. It's not part of a greater plan. One of the things that we call on the government to do is, we really do need to have a green plan that allows us to look across ministries at how we're able to pull together to develop good policies when it comes to greening the environment.

I'm sure there's much more here, but the wonderful luck you have is that I don't have my glasses and I can't read most of my notes. The great stuff I'm doing is all by memory. I'm looking at these little fuzzy things down on paper, trying to remember if I'm forgetting anything. There were a few things that I wanted to—

**Mr. Jeff Leal:** Give him your glasses.



**Mr. Gilles Bisson:** Hang on a second. Before I say I'm done, there was one other thing.

Oh, thank you so much. My Liberal colleagues are helping me out. God, I'm looking like a Liberal now. I can't see; it's all blurry. Hold it a second. I see this side and I see that side. Holy jeez. God almighty, this might even be more fun.

Anyway, those are my comments. I look forward to the government referring this particular bill to committee. We need to make sure that at the end of the day those who may be concerned in regard to this particular issue come to committee and tell us what they think, how we can make this bill stronger and better. At the end of the day, that's probably the best way to do legislation.

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier):** Questions and comments?

**Mr. Khalil Ramal:** I was listening to the member from the opposite side speaking for 20 minutes.

**Mr. Gilles Bisson:** You were heckling me.

**Mr. Khalil Ramal:** No, I was trying to support him and give him some ideas.

I think it's a very important bill. This bill is asking us to create some kind of safety on the road. Mr. Speaker, like yourself, myself and many others in this House, we drive a lot on Highway 401 or other highways in the province. Most of the time, we're competing with the trucks. The trucks speed a lot. It's like a giant driving in the street.

Not a long time ago, almost three years ago, I was driving from here back home to London. I was taking my time, putting my car onto cruise with 100 maximum, just driving and listening. It was beautiful weather. Then, all of a sudden, one of the big, giant trucks just hit my car. It was unbelievable. I felt like I was flying.

Those trucks—not all of them; some of them are very responsible, but a lot of trucks—work on miles. The more they drive, the more they charge the company. They want to make extra money. They want to go from A to Z fast and quick. That's why they don't care about the speed. They want to go fast and quick to make extra money.

That's why I think it's our responsibility as a government, as the Minister of Transportation, to put in some kind of safety mechanism to force those trucks to follow the law. Some of them, even though the law says the maximum speed on the highway is supposed to be 100 kilometres per hour—it depends on the highway; some of them are 80, some are 90, some are 100, but the maximum is 100 in Ontario, especially on the 401—don't stop. They speed fast and quick. It's amazing. Sometimes they put other people's lives in danger.

When you put an electronic guard on, an adjustable guard, they can adjust it to the maximum of 100 and pass out of the province of Ontario or go to the United States. If the jurisdictions allow them to speed more, they can adjust it again. I think we have that luxury, the ability to adjust the speed limit, with the technology which exists at the present time.

Our aim, our goal, is to protect the people who drive on the highway on a daily basis to go from their home to

work. We want them to go back safe to their families. It's not happening. If you drive on Highway 401, every day you see hundreds of accidents—

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier):** Thank you.

**Mr. Garfield Dunlop:** I appreciate being able to speak to this and make a few comments on it. First of all, I wanted to thank the member for Timmins—James Bay for his comments. I thought he brought in some great points.

I wanted to say to the government members that this could have been law by now. I'm hearing about all the wonderful things the bill does, but it could have been law because our member, Laurie Scott, brought it up as a private member's bill. Again, many private members' bills are brought up in this House and are ignored by this government. This was a typical example. You're talking about all the fuel you could have saved, you're talking about the emissions, you're talking about the people's lives you could have saved; you could have adopted Laurie Scott's bill two years ago now and you refused to do so for political partisan purposes. You can stand here today and brag all you want about the bill, but Laurie Scott had the bill on the floor, and I believe that the Deputy Premier at the time, George Smitherman, actually voted against the bill. It will be interesting to see how he will vote on this one.

1730

Second of all, I was disappointed in the member from London—Fanshawe's comments. He is treating all truckers as though they're almost cruel people and convicts. Read in your own Hansard the way you talked about them. A few bad apples may be a problem in the trucking industry but, by far and wide, the majority of truckers are very informed on public safety and on security. They look after their vehicles and they're safe vehicles. It's unfortunate that this government is attacking the trucking industry. That is what's happening this afternoon.

Clearly we will be supporting this, but we'll look forward to the regulations that come forward.

As I said earlier, this could have been law by now. Laurie Scott had the bill on the floor, and this party made sure they turned it down; they wouldn't bring it forward for debate. When this bill is finally passed, implemented, and hopefully good regulations put forward, it will be a Laurie Scott bill.

**Mrs. Carol Mitchell:** I rise to support Bill 41. I just want to set the record straight that, when this came forward, as the previous member spoke about, I did vote against it. But we have brought forward since then, as I did that day—I raised my concerns with regard to that private member's bill. I recognize the good work that has been done by the government to fix it so that it is acceptable.

*Interjections.*

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier):** Member for Simcoe North, order.

**Mrs. Carol Mitchell:** One of the things I wanted to talk about today was that I've received a number of calls



from the trucking industry. As many of you know, I have large trucking firms within my riding of Huron-Bruce. I have received a number of phone calls with regard specifically to this legislation and I can tell you that they are generally supportive of it. Why are they generally supportive of it? Specifically, here we see that at the OTA today 50% of the trucks already have the limiters in place. In the American Trucking Association, 80% state that they are already voluntarily using speed limiters.

I recognize that there has been a lot of work on this piece of legislation from the work that was done prior to this. I did want to inform the House that I will be supporting this legislation. I look to the opportunity to speak to this in greater length on another day.

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier):** Questions and comments? Response?

**Mr. Gilles Bisson:** Thank you to the members who commented on my short dissertation on this particular subject.

Reading the legislation, much of what's going to happen will be left to regulation. That's why I think it's pretty important that we get off to committee to make sure we give proper instructions. First of all, let's get the legislation right if there are problems. Second, let's give some proper instructions when it comes to developing regulation.

The issue the member from London-Fanshawe talks about is how the person who drives a truck in Ontario and operates in Ontario, and goes into the southern United States, could basically turn off the speed limiter as he or she is driving into the United States, where they may allow faster speeds.

As I read the legislation, you can't tamper with the device. So what is considered a tampering device? An on-off switch? It's a question. You need to get this down. If a person is allowed to have an on-off switch in a truck leaving the Ontario jurisdiction, then it stands to reason that the person may turn the switch off while driving in Ontario, thus trying to get around the legislation.

We need to think this stuff through. Everybody agrees that, yes, it makes sense to limit the speeds of trucks for a whole bunch of reasons, such as greening our environment, making our highways safer—nobody argues that point—but sometimes we make legislation a little bit like the way they make sausage. The process ain't very pretty, and sometimes what comes out the other end may not be as good as what you want. All I'm saying is that we need to get this thing into committee in order to think it through, because I don't think it will be as simple as putting an on-off switch on the speed limiter. Leave it up to the regulatory people. I think they're going to box us in far more than that.

I appreciate the time we had, and I look forward to the comments of other members. I say again, I look forward to this bill going to committee and having the time it needs—not an inordinate amount of time, but enough time to do this right.

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier):** Further debate?

**Mr. Jeff Leal:** I'm pleased to have the opportunity to speak about Bill 41, the speed limiters legislation that we want to bring forward in the province of Ontario. I acknowledge that road safety is not a partisan issue and I do recognize the contributions already made in debate. The member from Newmarket-Aurora was a former Minister of Transportation in the government of Ontario. My friend and colleague the member for Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock had a private member's bill, as did the member from Toronto Centre-Rosedale when he was in opposition. So road safety is something that I believe all three parties can come together on, because we're all interested in road safety.

It's of particular concern in my riding of Peterborough. I have two family-owned trucking businesses. I'd like to just get that on the record. First of all, there's Bryan Cathcart of Cathcart Trucking. I know Bryan extremely well. I believe Bryan is the third-generation Cathcart in the trucking business. His first cousin is the reeve of Cavan-Millbrook-North Monaghan, Neal Cathcart. So the Cathcart family has made an enormous contribution to businesses in the Peterborough area. I know Bryan Cathcart does extensive trucking for GE in Peterborough, for Siemens and for Quaker Oats, and has the opportunity to take those fine products and distribute them not only throughout Ontario and Canada but throughout North America. Then there's Evan Meyers, who owns Meyers Transport, another family-owned company in Peterborough, the third or fourth generation in the trucking business.

I know for a fact that those two individuals, Mr. Cathcart and Mr. Meyers, go to the nth degree to provide driver training for those individuals who are putting their rigs on the road, because they know that if they have drivers who are operating in a very responsible manner, staying within the speed limit, certainly that's a personal reflection on their businesses. They want to make sure that they have the very best people available driving their rigs.

A number of years ago, TPT Transport was headquartered in Peterborough, Toronto Peterborough Transport.

**Mr. Mike Colle:** That was the hockey team.

**Mr. Jeff Leal:** That was the hockey team. They sponsored the Peterborough Petes for many years. In those days, of course, they were owned by the Montreal Canadiens and a local guy, Bob Gainey, who's the current general manager of the Canadiens and doing very well, though they lost a close one last night in Boston. But we know that next Tuesday they will rectify that and take a 3-1 lead in that series. I don't mean to digress, Mr. Speaker. I will get back on the bill here, but I wanted to put in a plug for the hometown boy, Bob Gainey, and the great job he's doing with the Montreal Canadiens.

*Interjection.*

**Mr. Jeff Leal:** Oh, yeah. My wife went to school with his younger sister. When I was a summer student at Quaker Oats in Peterborough, I worked for his dad.

**Mr. Mike Colle:** Okay, get back on the subject, will you?



**Mr. Jeff Leal:** I don't mean to digress, Mr. Speaker.

I want to pay tribute to our colleague the Minister of Finance, the Honourable Dwight Duncan. I know we certainly offer condolences to Minister Duncan and his family on the recent death of his mother in Windsor, Ontario. I know every member in this Legislature's thoughts are with Minister Duncan during this very difficult personal family time.

The Minister of Transportation is in the House today. I know he was certainly instrumental in convincing our colleague the Minister of Finance to include \$448 million over the next five years to accelerate projects to rehabilitate bridges that are part of the provincial highway work. We know there is a correlation between safe roads, safe bridges and safe operations in terms of tractor-trailers. This investment is expected to result in improvements to over 100 bridges in addition to those as part of ReNew Ontario. Through this five-year ReNew Ontario infrastructure plan, the government is investing some \$3.4 billion to improve the provincial highway network in southern Ontario and \$1.8 billion in northern Ontario.

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I know that's of grave concern to my good friend the member from Timmins-James Bay, who's always very concerned about the bridges and highways in northern Ontario. Mr. Speaker, you know that in your part of Ontario—and I know you were a strong advocate for getting improvements to your section of the 401 through Essex and into Windsor, along with our colleague the member from Chatham-Kent-Essex, because over the last number of years, there have been some really serious accidents in that area. There have been a number of fatalities, and part of it had to do with road conditions. I know that you and the member from Chatham-Kent-Essex were certainly instrumental in making sure that that funding got in place to rehabilitate those roads in your area.

We'll provide another \$927 million for other projects in southern Ontario. Just to mention the new roads that we're building in the north, these are key corridor projects, including: Highway 17 east and west of Thunder Bay; the Thunder Bay Expressway; Highway 17 around North Bay; and Highway 11 around North Bay. This work will result—

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier):** Member from Peterborough, I know that you're going to relate this somehow to Bill 41. I can just hear it coming.

**Mr. Jeff Leal:** In a roundabout way—

**Mr. Peter Kormos:** Bill 41, Jeff.

**Mr. Jeff Leal:** Bill 41, of course, is a great bill. But in order for Bill 41 to succeed—I will make the direct link right now—in order to have safe driving in tractor-trailers, we've got to make sure that we have safe roads and bridges. Often what happens—I will make the link again—is, if you don't have safe roads and safe bridges, then there is this real urge, perhaps, to increase one's speed to make up for lost time when you don't have good highways and good bridges on which to travel.

**Mr. Mike Colle:** Potholes are very dangerous.

**Mr. Jeff Leal:** We know there are a lot of potholes. We heard from the Minister of Finance, our good friend the Honourable Jim Flaherty; he said not too long ago that the federal government is not in the pothole business. But we really need to explain to him that trucking and the trucking industry are the backbone of Ontario's economy.

You know, that GDP we have here in Ontario is so dependent on getting our products to markets throughout the rest of Ontario, Canada and into the United States. We know that our auto companies, Ford, Chrysler, General Motors—I see the member from Durham here; he has a large General Motors assembly plant in his riding. We know that there are a number of parts suppliers in my area of Peterborough and the GTA area that are dependent on just-in-time inventories and just-in-time assembly and production. They're very dependent on getting tractor-trailers into those facilities to make sure that the Ontario economy continues to hop.

We're very optimistic, even though I look opposite, and some days I see Herbert Hoover on one seat over there and I see R.B. Bennett in the other seat, the doom-and-gloom prophets. We all remember the great words of Franklin Delano Roosevelt in his inaugural address in 1933 when he became President: "We have nothing to fear but fear itself."

I want to get back to the bill here—

**Mr. Bill Murdoch:** On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: As you mentioned, we're supposed to be talking about limiters on trucks. I fail to see how, by talking about Hoover and—I understand that Bob Gainey is the best manager in the NHL, so I agree with him there, but for the rest of it he seems to be wandering off, talking about the—

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier):** That part of it is not a point of order, but we will keep in mind that we want to keep to the subject.

**Mr. Jeff Leal:** Yes, that's right. We all know that every road in Ontario has shoulders, and we want to make sure that they're safe, so I'll get back to the bill.

This is a very important piece of legislation, when you think that this is going to be part of our key climate change initiative. A mandatory speed limit will certainly improve the quality of the air that we breathe. In fact, there will be a 280,000-metric-tonne reduction in greenhouse gas emissions, which is the equivalent of 2,700 tractor-trailers off the road each year. I know that's so important because we all know the former Vice-President of the United States, Al Gore, who is very involved—he had his film, *An Inconvenient Truth*. He has been going around North America. He was in Montreal recently talking about the positive things that provincial governments can do to address greenhouse gases. This is part of our plan, to bring in these speed limiters to 105 kilometres an hour, to reduce the amount of greenhouse gas that's spewed by tractor-trailers along our roads.

The road issue is important in my part of Ontario. When the previous government downloaded roads, 47% of that happened in eastern Ontario. We're still trying to



recover from that. This government is helping us out with great investments for safe roads for our tractor-trailer operators, who do a great job. This will increase road safety. Research shows that excessive speed is a factor in 23% of crashes in the province of Ontario. In my earlier remarks, Mr. Speaker, I alluded to that section of the 401 that you're very familiar with.

Also, this bill will save 100 million litres of diesel fuel being used in the trucking industry.

Ontario traffic survey data, collected at three highway locations, show that between 30% and 60% of large trucks travelling on the 400 series of highways are speeding in excess of 105 kilometres an hour. I know that my friend from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound is a guy who has been a strong advocate since he arrived in this House in 1990 for road safety—

**Mr. Mike Colle:** He's a motorcyclist.

**Mr. Jeff Leal:** Well, he's a great guy and great hockey fan.

**Mr. Garfield Dunlop:** What have you got against Laurie Scott?

**Mr. Jeff Leal:** I know he is convinced that we need more legislative initiatives to improve road safety here in Ontario. We'll be counting on him to indeed support it. I had a nice trip to Thunder Bay with the member. We chatted a lot about hockey on our way up, a very pleasant trip indeed.

Studies further show that casualties would be reduced by 7% for every one-kilometre reduction in average vehicle speed if we implement this. I said to my friend from Simcoe, when I opened my remarks, that credit is due to the member from Kawartha Lakes-Haliburton; I mentioned that. I also mentioned the former transportation minister from Newmarket-Aurora, who was a real advocate for road safety. And certainly the comments by the member from Timmins-James Bay—road safety is not a partisan issue. This is one of the rare opportunities where people can come together in unison to make sure that we make road safety our number one issue here in Ontario.

We have been in consultation with the Ontario trucking industry. We've also looked at comments from the American trucking industry. A lot of their members already volunteer to use speed limiters. That's a good start. There will be an extensive education initiative here in Ontario to work with not only the larger companies who are involved in trucking—I think of the trucking firm from Algoma-Manitoulin—in the OTA to make sure that the education component of this bill is put out for discussion, to make sure that drivers comply with the 105-kilometre-per-hour speed limit and that the appropriate technology is put in place, and to really work with those independent truck operators that broker themselves out to deliver freight for a wide variety of companies, to make sure that they become part of this important equation, to work with them to make sure that they will be able to comply with this legislation.

I suspect there will be the opportunity, when it's discussed between the various House leaders, to perhaps

take this bill on the road in committee and hear deputations from individuals who are involved in the industry, individuals who are independent truck operators, who are a significant group in the Ontario economy, and those larger trucking organizations that do the bulk of the trucking here in Ontario, to get them involved in this.

We've seen the great proliferation of the use of tractor-trailers in Ontario in the last 20 years to ship goods with the introduction of just-in-time production. At one time, of course, in the not-too-distant past we shipped by rail. There were rail lines all over Ontario that were moving our products. Then governments of the day of various political stripes decided that rail links were no longer being used. Some of them got sold off. Some of it was given to municipalities and developed into walking and cycling trails and put to good use. But you can see in retrospect, as climate change as an issue came to the forefront—we look back, and hindsight is always 20-20; perhaps we would not have got rid of some of those rail lines that no doubt could be put to use today to ship products and goods and services to our various people who need them.

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I understand that the province of Quebec has speed limiter legislation in place, and we'll have the opportunity to find out what the experience in Quebec has been with the use of speed limiters. Also, I believe that Transport Canada, which has the responsibility of covering groups that do pan-Canadian activities, has been looking at this issue of speed limiters as an initiative. Our former colleague the Honourable John Baird, who is the Minister of the Environment—the government of Canada is looking, of course, as we all are, in positive ways to address the issue of climate change. I know that Transport Canada is also looking at this particular issue.

I really commend all those involved: the member from Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock; the former Minister of Transportation, from Newmarket-Aurora; and the new transportation minister of this Parliament, the Honourable Jim Bradley. Mr. Bradley certainly appreciates the role the trucking industry plays in his part of Ontario, St. Catharines being the home of General Motors and some other large organizations that are dependent on trucking products out of that area. I know that Mr. Bradley, over his long and very distinguished career since 1977, has always been a huge advocate of initiatives that will improve road safety. He certainly is a man who uses the Queen Elizabeth Way on a very frequent basis, going through the Hamilton area, which is still a great hub of manufacturing in a variety of areas.

**Mr. Mike Colle:** He knows first-hand the importance—

**Mr. Jeff Leal:** He knows first-hand, seeing the dramatic increase in the number of trucks that are used on our 400-series highways. I wasn't surprised when he stood in the House the other day to initiate this legislation because he is a guy with first-hand experience in this particular area.

I'm told that speed limiters have been used extensively in the European Union, in the United Kingdom and

Australia, three other jurisdictions that have had positive results from using speed limiters. In the European Union, I think of Germany and the autobahn, a very high rate of speed in that area—bringing in speed limiters in a very positive way, as a central part of our green program to fight climate change.

We're looking forward to hearing members from the other side of the House. We heard some very positive leadoff speeches today from the member from Newmarket-Aurora and the member from Timmins-James Bay. I want to listen—the member from Durham's community is very dependent on having a vibrant trucking community, and he's a guy who I know has always been a strong advocate of road safety.

**Mr. Mike Colle:** He cares.

**Mr. Jeff Leal:** I know he cares, because he was born in Peterborough, and anybody who was born in Peterborough cares for road safety. I know the member from Durham is there. He has had a couple of private member's bills, one of them dealing with cellphone use. This is all part and parcel of our work, collectively, that we do here to improve road safety in Ontario.

I know I only have less than a minute to go. Again, we see this as a very proactive piece of legislation, an opportunity for all of us to come together, an opportunity, depending on discussion that happens with the House leaders, to take this bill out to hear what the grassroots people—

**Mr. Mike Colle:** We should have a public hearing in Peterborough.

**Mr. Jeff Leal:** I think we could have a public hearing in Peterborough. I know just the other week I dropped by the Tim Hortons there on George Street. For those of you who know Peterborough well, it's right across from the Holiday Inn. People are very concerned about road safety. They say to me, "Jeff, we want to make sure when you're down there in Toronto representing us that you support the kind of initiatives that will improve road safety and try to reduce the amount of carnage that we see on our roads."

I think of Sergeant Cam Woolley, who's often the public relations voice of the OPP. He comes on and he talks about road safety. He talks about things the Ontario government can do to bring about improved road safety.

**Mr. Mike Colle:** Buckling up. People have got to buckle up.

**Mr. Jeff Leal:** Buckle up; and appropriate child care seats.

I know the Minister of Transportation, a very thoughtful individual. When he wanted to bring this legislation forward, he wanted to make sure it's part and parcel of our thrust, along with the official opposition and the third party, to bring about road safety here in Ontario.

*Second reading debate deemed adjourned.*

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier):** As I refer to this fine pocket watch given to me by my wife on one of our 46 wedding anniversaries, I declare this House adjourned until 6:45 of the clock.

*The House adjourned at 1756.*

*Evening meeting reported in volume B.*



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**Assemblée législative  
de l'Ontario**

Première session, 39<sup>e</sup> législature

**Official Report  
of Debates  
(Hansard)**

**Journal  
des débats  
(Hansard)**

**Monday 14 April 2008**

**Lundi 14 avril 2008**

Speaker  
Honourable Steve Peters

Président  
L'honorable Steve Peters

Clerk  
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Greffière  
Deborah Deller



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## LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 14 April 2008

## ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 14 avril 2008

*The House met at 1845.*

### ORDERS OF THE DAY

#### INVESTING IN ONTARIO ACT, 2008

#### LOI DE 2008 PERMETTANT D'INVESTIR DANS L'ONTARIO

Resuming the debate adjourned on April 10, 2008, on the motion for second reading of Bill 35, An Act to authorize the Minister of Finance to make payments to eligible recipients out of money appropriated by the Legislature and to amend the Fiscal Transparency and Accountability Act, 2004, the Ministry of Treasury and Economics Act and the Treasury Board Act, 1991 / *Projet de loi 35, Loi autorisant le ministre des Finances à faire des versements aux bénéficiaires admissibles sur les crédits affectés par la Législature et modifiant la Loi de 2004 sur la transparence et la responsabilité financières, la Loi sur le ministère du Trésor et de l'Économie et la Loi de 1991 sur le Conseil du Trésor.*

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath):** Questions and comments on the speech from the member for Oxford?

**Mr. Gilles Bisson:** It was a wonderful speech.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath):** Questions and comments? The member for Whitby–Oshawa.

**Mrs. Christine Elliott:** I do appreciate the opportunity to comment on the comments made by my colleague the member for Oxford on Bill 35, Investing in Ontario Act.

At the outset, I should say that if ever there was a cynical piece of business, this is it. There's so much that you could say, on so many levels, about this bill. But just to divide it into two major categories, first of all, there is this pretense at allocating money to municipalities if the surplus reaches a certain amount at year end. Certainly, it's not looking like the surplus is going to be over that level for this year, and probably not next year or the year after, if the economic downturn that the experts are recommending comes to pass. So we've got this situation here where we're paying lip service to the idea about handing out money to municipalities, but in actual fact, it's very unlikely that they're going to be receiving anything, which they're accepting in good faith. But we know how this government operates and we know the

way that they deal with things. They like to talk about it, but we're not going to see too much action on it.

This has been picked up by the councillor from Mississauga, Carolyn Parrish, who noted this government is just playing games with them and that—

**Mr. Gilles Bisson:** She's also very big on the pit bull these days.

**Mrs. Christine Elliott:** That's right, she is very big on that issue.

As she also noted, though Mayor McCallion may be willing to accept crumbs, she's not willing to do it. So there are lots of municipal leaders out there who I think are being taken for a ride by this government.

They talk about wanting to be partners with the municipalities. I think that what they should do is be honest with municipalities and give them some indication of what they're actually going to be doing for them on an ongoing basis. Give them some stable funding on a multi-year level so they can plan for the infrastructure work that they want to have done in the municipalities, so they can know from year to year what they're going to be getting. But as our leader, John Tory, has indicated, this is basically just a crapshoot. You never know from one year to the next whether there is going to be any surplus or whether you're going to be left with your hands empty once again.

I think there's lots that can be said about this. I look forward to further debate on this. I know that many of my colleagues have a lot to say on this. If they're really serious about investing in Ontario, they would have allocated the money that is really needed by the municipalities in order to keep things going on an ongoing basis, and to be clear to the people of Ontario what it is that they're planning on doing.

1850

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath):** Member for Oxford for a response?

**Mr. Ernie Hardeman:** It's a pleasure to rise again and to thank the member for Timmins–James Bay for acknowledging my speech. Obviously, since it was made last Thursday, it's a long time ago, and a lot of members who would have been there to be paying attention on a Thursday afternoon may not be the same members who are here on a Monday evening to respond to the presentation. But I do thank him for responding, and the member for Whitby–Oshawa for her kind words as they relate primarily not so much to how it was presented but to what was presented in speaking to this bill.



We can't use the word "deceitful," but Bill 35 is a bill that doesn't deliver what the government says it's supposed to deliver. This bill says it's investing in Ontario and it will provide long-term and stable funding to municipalities. Somebody, on Thursday, as I was speaking, mentioned the fact it was like "slush fund heaven" because in fact all this bill does is allow the minister and cabinet to decide, if there are surpluses, to spend them any way they see fit. I think it's important to recognize that the government says this is a bill to help provide stable funding for municipalities. The word "municipality" does not appear in the bill. The word "infrastructure," which the municipalities were going to use this money for, does not appear in this bill. So in fact, it really just allows the Minister of Finance to spend the money where he and cabinet feel it is appropriate to spend it, where, in their opinion, it will do the most good for re-election. I think that is a deceitful way of dealing with funding municipalities who require stable funding for their future infrastructure.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath):** Further debate? The member for Nepean—Carleton.

**Ms. Lisa MacLeod:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker—Madam Speaker. You always trip me up, but it's wonderful to see a woman in the chair.

It's a pleasure to be able to address my comments today to Bill 35, Investing in Ontario Act. I want to make a quick comment about something that my colleague from Whitby—Oshawa just said. She said this is a cynical piece of legislation, and how right she is. Instead of calling this the Investing in Ontario Act, we could almost be calling it the divesting in Ontario act.

The McGuinty government, through this piece of legislation, is trying or attempting to legalize what they're now famous for, which is their year-end slush funds, their practice of year-end spending—which just last year was condemned by the Auditor General—after skirting normal accountability and control provisions.

Madam Speaker, you'll remember the now famous example of the cricket club here in Ontario that requested \$150,000 and made off like bandits with \$1 million in year-end funding with little accountability. It was more about who you knew than what you needed. This is a real problem for us in Ontario with respect to how we want to fund municipalities.

When I talk about that, I just want to say that my biggest challenge in accepting this piece of legislation is the fact that it undermines something the McGuinty government hung their hat on two years ago, which was the fiscal service delivery review. Now they have delayed, they have dithered and they have denied the province the results of that study, which we had expected last year in August. When that didn't occur on the one-year anniversary of the commitment the McGuinty Liberals made, we had at least expected it would be tabled before the 2007 election. Of course it wasn't tabled before the 2007 election. We now know it's still being delayed. This continuing dithering of who does what, if you like, in the province of Ontario has cost our municipalities, at least

for the 2008 budget and their planning for what they can spend and what they can count on from provincial coffers.

From that perspective, I think this piece of legislation, without even looking at the nuts and bolts of the legislation, effectively undermines the position the McGuinty Liberals have taken with respect to municipalities in sustainable long-term funding, which we're expecting will come out of the fiscal service delivery review with municipalities and the province.

Again, I go back to this being a year-end slush fund and the fact that we do need more transparency. The Minister of Finance announced in a press conference that this would be a bill to share a portion of surpluses with municipalities for capital infrastructure, yet neither of those words appear in this legislation. The words "municipalities" and "infrastructure," that he had promised in the House, are both absent from this legislation. Instead, what we find is that it appears that any group, such as the Ontario Cricket Association, or any other entity or not-for-profit, will be eligible for these funds. I have a real problem with that. They've essentially legalized year-end slush funds. Municipal infrastructure is something that should be planned in a reasonable and responsible way, but this piece of legislation is absolutely the opposite. And as I said, they've undermined the Provincial-Municipal Fiscal and Service Delivery Review, which they promised us.

Municipalities need stable and predictable long-term funding. If the provincial-municipal funding review had been conducted in a timely manner, then such funding arrangements could have been included in this year's budget. Now this announcement, this cynical announcement, as my colleague from Whitby—Oshawa rightly pointed out, makes it clear that this government, this McGuinty government, has no real interest in paying down the debt and no real interest in helping municipalities.

There's something else that troubles me. The bill is very small. It's about a page and a half. What it does do is give great discretion to the cabinet and the Minister of Finance so that they could authorize the Minister of Finance to make payments to eligible recipients, defined as any person or entity—no individual—or partnership of individuals that does not carry on activities for gain or profit.

Furthermore, the cabinet would have full discretion over how much of the surplus, if any, is given each year to pay down the debt. Debt repayment is a very serious issue. As my colleagues opposite know, the debt has grown under their government by some \$13 billion. We are now \$162 billion in debt. That costs this province an estimated \$9 billion per year, or \$1 million that could go into tax reductions or other needed programs. But instead, they're backtracking on the plan to pay down the debt. Can you imagine that: \$1 million an hour? That's a lot of year-end grants to cricket clubs when they're only asking for \$150,000. The real problem here is that that's \$1 million—not being taken from the member for Northumberland. No, it's from my daughter, it's from



Ms. Jones's daughter and it's from the kids of this province who are expecting to grow up in a prosperous province. But unfortunately they don't understand the challenges of our economy.

The state of our economy right now is such that we've lost close to 200,000 manufacturing jobs since you people have taken office. We have seen unemployment in this province for the first time in 30 years lead the national average. Can you believe that? Then they built this bill, this piece of legislation, this divesting in Ontario act, based on budget surpluses. They sold this bowl of goods to municipalities, saying, "Well you know, once we have \$800 million, you'll get this \$600 million." Do you know what? We're on the cusp of a recession that you folks have presided over, and you presided over this economy for the past 5 years, with 2000,000 manufacturing jobs lost, higher taxes and \$28 billion more in spending—

**Mr. Garfield Dunlop:** How much in higher taxes?

**Ms. Lisa MacLeod:** It's close to \$2,000, I think, per person. When you're looking at that—and then they're adding \$1 million per hour for what we are supposed to be paying toward the debt, or they're adding \$1 million an hour to the debt, you really get concerned. You get concerned that when they pretend they're going to give municipalities a lot of funding, with no strings attached, municipalities are going to expect that this is going to be sustainable funding. The challenge in the way they built this bill is that that funding might not be there next year. We may be into a serious recession next year. We may lose 200,000 jobs in this province next year, and that wasn't taken into consideration, not only in this piece of legislation but also in the budget bill itself. And I think when you look at that, that's a real issue.

1900

One of the other things that I'd like to just touch on is the previous budget, because this is essentially a budget bill. It was announced very near the time the budget was introduced, and this was one of the major planks. I have a real problem with the budget. It wasn't a very good budget because, again, it ignored the fact that the economy here in Ontario is slowing; that the major indicators are telling us that we have to reduce spending and that we have to target our spending in this province.

The government came up with three centrepieces in their budget—or one major centrepiece and two other little offspring. What troubles me about that is, of the three cornerstones in this budget, one was skills investment and second-career training. That money was not new money from this government. In fact, it was money that was announced by Prime Minister Harper earlier this year, which was rebuffed by this Liberal government. In fact, Premier McGuinty at the time wasn't very fond of this \$500-million announcement from the Ontario trust that Prime Minister Harper had set up. Rather, what happened is, the Premier decided to rebuff, rebuke, and then he ultimately repackaged Prime Minister Harper's skills training plan and ended up putting it into his own second-career training strategy. The skills training is a recycled plan from the feds, so it's not even real money that came

from the province. In fact, when it came time to sign on the dotted line, do you think these guys did it? No. They waited until the day after they tabled the budget to actually call the finance minister and the Prime Minister to say, "I'm going to sign on the dotted line so we can get that money."

The second issue—and we're talking a lot about health care. That plank in the budget was yet again more recycled federal money. The federal health increase in transfers was roughly similar to what we've seen in this budget in health increases. So again, it's just recycled federal money.

Of course, the third thing that they're most proud of is this bill, what I like to call the divesting in Ontario act, which is just a legalized form of slush funding—a total of a page and a half in length and essentially a bill that, I can tell you, I don't think will do anything for the province's municipalities and our infrastructure budget and deficit.

The Toronto Star recently reported that a former Liberal member of Parliament, who's now a city councillor in Mississauga, said of the Liberals, "They are playing games with us," that Hazel McCallion "is willing to take crumbs. I'm not."

It said that she "slammed the provincial plan, saying the proposal leaves too many questions unanswered and would leave cities in the lurch if there's a recession."

I think if you go back and listen to what I've said today, this is indeed what's going to happen, and we'll remember in four years. We'll look back and say, "We told you so, Mr. McGuinty and Mr. Duncan. This plan that you've put together has fooled people. You've made them think that they've got \$600 million to divvy up amongst themselves, but really they don't, because we are into a recession." This is exactly what Carolyn Parrish was talking about.

The Star then goes on to say, "What is needed is consistent long-term funding, not a system that leaves municipalities dependent on the possibility of a surplus"—again, the possibility of a surplus. "The legislation still puts municipalities in the situation of having to go cap in hand to Queen's Park every year."

Then she goes back to the downloading and this fiscal review. When is that going to be tabled in this Legislature, I have to ask the crowd opposite.

The Toronto Star said again last week, "Duncan's Bill is Flawed...."

"A close examination of its contents shows no mention of municipalities or infrastructure," as we mentioned here a few minutes ago. "Nor does it set out the threshold or formula for distributing the surplus money."

Now, if that isn't a boondoggle waiting to happen, I don't know what it is. But the Toronto Star gets it right here, because they do put the caveat there. They say, "Be aware that there is no threshold, there is no formula for distributing the surplus money."

They say, "Instead, the bill provides that payments may be made to an 'eligible recipient'—defined only as



an entity 'that does not carry on activities for the purpose of gain or profit.'"

Again, of course, it leaves the bill—and all the money that goes out the back door—to be decided through cabinet. So you're now allowing cabinet, as my colleague the member for Niagara West—Glanbrook would say, to "hand-pick a wide variety of grant recipients that suit (its) political purposes."

This is a political bill—nothing more, nothing less. They are legalizing a slush fund. They want to close the debate tonight so that we won't talk about it and expose this further, so that our good friends at the Toronto Star and the Toronto Sun will stop writing about how flawed this bill is.

Let's go to our friend Christina Blizzard from the Toronto Sun. She called this piece of legislation "voodoo economics." She said that's what "Finance Minister Dwight Duncan was indulging in yesterday when he came up with his plan to allocate 'unanticipated surpluses' that came in at the end of a fiscal year to municipal infrastructure."

This is what Christina Blizzard says: "Here's how I read it: When the government public accounts come out in July, if there is more money in the provincial kitty than they'd expected in their third quarter projections, then some of that will be allocated to municipalities. Last year, there was a \$2.3-billion surprise surplus. Under the current law, all that money goes to pay down the province's massive \$163-billion accumulated debt.

"Under the new plan, if the extra cash is more than \$800 million, then the first \$600 million will go to pay down the debt. The rest gets distributed to the province's 445 municipalities...."

Here's where I have a problem with that. I represent the second-largest municipality in the province of Ontario. I'll tell you what we received: \$14.9 million—no strings attached, out the back door. And what did they spend it on? Do you think it was spent on roads, bridges and infrastructure, as it was intended? No. It was spent on shovelling snow. It literally was a slush fund to pay for the slush on the streets of the city of Ottawa. The second-largest city in this province is relying on scraps. Not only did we only get \$14.9 million and it had to go towards paying for the slush to be shovelled, we didn't get any funding for one of the largest infrastructure priorities in the city of Ottawa, which is the Strandherd-Armstrong bridge, in order to expand rapid transit.

If you're wondering why our municipality has to put their \$14.9 million intended for municipal infrastructure into its operating costs, I'm going to tell you why: We've got something called the McGuinty gap. Between 2004 and 2006, between three vital local services, there was a great discrepancy between what the city of Ottawa received per household and what the city of Toronto received per household. For transit, the Liberals gave the city of Toronto \$246.06 per household, while Ottawa only received \$54.44. For general government services, Toronto cashed in at \$191.97 per household from the province; the city of Ottawa got \$4.44. Toronto got

\$511.86 per household for ambulance services, while the city of Ottawa received \$370.

**1910**

I notice there are two members from the city of Ottawa over there. I have no idea how they can bite their tongue in their caucus, because guess what? The people in our city received \$519.75 less per household than the city of Toronto. Our city taxes are 7.5% higher because of them. I'll tell you something. That's why our city had to pull out a certain portion of their infrastructure funding toward operating costs.

*Interjections.*

**Ms. Lisa MacLeod:** I just want to go back—I know I've got them all upset over there and that's great, because I'm upset too. With the last minute I have here, I'll talk about an issue of the Legislature, trying to make it more family-friendly like they had promised just before the session resumed in December. We weren't going to sit nights anymore. Here we are, sitting in the evening, because they want to ram through pieces of legislation that are ill-conceived and ill-thought-out.

They're not going to do anything for the longevity of this province, to sustain our municipalities and to protect our taxpayers. I think they ought to be ashamed of themselves for putting a piece of legislation—I don't know what the word is; you want to say shameful, but that's probably too soft. It's cynical; it's fluffy; it does nothing. It has no long-term planning attached to it, no long-term funding attached to it. They basically just rolled up their little goody bag and said, "Here are some trinkets and baubles and some recycled federal money." And guess what? That's it.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath):** Questions and comments?

**Mr. Lou Rinaldi:** I won't take my two minutes because I probably need two hours, but I just want to make a quick comment. The member for Nepean—Carleton is criticizing the money that we're giving to municipalities to help them along.

I was in municipal government when that party was in government. We actually got transfers: downloaded highways, downloaded bridges, downloaded social services. There was no money, not even invoices. I just can't get it. I just don't understand where they're coming from. I'm going to end right here because this really makes my blood boil.

**Mr. Norman W. Sterling:** As I said to one of the other members of the Liberal caucus, if you don't like it, upload them. Quit complaining and upload them.

**Mr. Lou Rinaldi:** We have been.

**Mr. Norman W. Sterling:** They're still complaining. Upload them.

I think the worst part of Bill 35 is this: It leads us away from accountability and transparency in the government. What it does is it allows the government to flush money out in August from the previous year's budget, without any strings attached to that money. It basically takes away from the trust that the taxpayer has in their government. In my view, governments are charged, when



they receive taxpayers' money, to be certain that that money is spent for certain purposes. In this case, the government would have no idea, either about the quantum of money or what it was going to be spent for.

We have seen a recent example in our great city of Ottawa with regard to this government giving the city of Ottawa \$14.9 million for "infrastructure." It's a small amount in comparison to what the previous Harris government gave the city of Ottawa. But what happened here—and this is a classic example of why this year-end spending is bad—is that they can't call the city of Ottawa to account for that \$14.9 million, because in order for them to get the expense in the last year, they have to give it unconditionally.

So the government can say, "We're giving you this money for infrastructure." Presently, if they write the cheque before March 31, they don't have any conditions on it. The only way they can expense it in the previous year is by making it unconditional. That's why this is a bad bill. It's about lack of accountability, not accountability.

**Mr. Gilles Bisson:** I'd like to commend the member for a great speech.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath):** Questions and comments? The member for Dufferin—Caledon.

*Interjections.*

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath):** I'm sorry. My error; I apologize. The member for Scarborough—Rouge River

**Mr. Bas Balkissoon:** I just want to thank my colleague in front of me for raising the awareness of the Speaker that I was standing up. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Let me say that as a former municipal politician too, I sat on municipal council during the years of the Mike Harris government, and I've got to tell you that the downloading that occurred then of many of the services did put municipalities in a lot of difficulty.

What this government has been doing, as the previous speaker was complaining about, has been uploading. We've uploaded ambulance services. In fact, in this budget we're uploading ODSP. We're back in the transit business. This government has launched a major transit plan and is funding it.

It's really difficult to sit here and listen to the complaints from the other side when they're fully aware of what problems they created in the past, and this government has been doing everything to respect municipalities and invest in municipalities again.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath):** Response from the member from Nepean—Carleton?

**Ms. Lisa MacLeod:** I love listening to the Liberals, because they forget that when Mike Harris was in government, we had the strongest economy in this country. We were creating jobs and creating opportunities for young Ontarians. But I digress, because we're actually talking about Bill 35, their divesting in Ontario act, and I'm going to just make my points again as subtly as I'm going to have to.

They have undermined their own Provincial-Municipal Fiscal Service and Delivery Review with this bill. They've legalized a year-end slush fund that sends money out the back door with no strings attached, no accountability and no formal process. They are taking away from debt repayment in this province, which is close to \$200 billion, and they've done this. Their recent budget was built on a deck of cards of recycled federal money for skills training, recycled federal money for health care, and then this slush fund. In Ottawa, this slush fund money quite literally was used to shovel the slush, and they have refused time and again to provide municipalities with stable, long-term and transparent funding. This has created, in my municipality, the McGuinty gap.

I can tell you that I will be voting against this piece of legislation as well as the budget bill, because I think these folks are out to lunch. They have decided that the economy is as rosy as in their dreams, but I think the rest of us in this Legislature and most of the people out there in the communities we represent understand. We're hitting a recession, folks. There's going to be no surpluses for you to give to municipalities in another year.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath):** Further debate?

**Ms. Helena Jaczek:** It gives me great pleasure to rise in support of this bill. I certainly believe that this bill is typical of our well-balanced, prudent approach to the economic situation we're faced with.

First of all, to pay down the debt to an extensive amount shows that we are cognizant of our requirements in that regard, but more importantly, as I've heard from a couple of my colleagues who were municipal councillors—even though I was not elected, I was the commissioner of health services; I heard those debates at regional council in the municipality of York. I was very much aware of the distress municipalities found themselves in.

I've been consulting with the four municipalities in my riding, those municipal mayors and councillors, and they keep telling me how impressed they are with this government's approach to their needs. They are trying to make up for the years of neglect that they suffered under the previous government. They have many priorities within their municipalities, and any assistance that we can give them will be most welcome.

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**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath):** Questions and comments?

**Mr. Norman W. Sterling:** The member talks about how much they are paying down the debt of the province: some \$600 million. I want to remind the member that if you look at page 156 of the budget documents, this page shows that the increase in the debt incurred by this government over the last year—when they had \$5 billion more in revenue than they had anticipated—was \$5.5 billion. You're paying off \$600 million. You're short by \$4.9 billion. You've created \$4.9 billion of new debt. Now, what that means is that each year, my grandchildren and my children are going to have to pay



over \$300 million in interest costs as we go forward. So you haven't done a good job at all in terms of reducing the debt. In fact, when McGuinty came to government, there was about \$149 billion in debt, and now there is \$162 billion in debt. You've increased the overall debt of this province by over \$13 billion, and at a time when you are collecting record revenues from year to year.

This is not a government that has been fiscally prudent. What they have been doing is that they have been building some hospitals, some schools and some roads, but they haven't been paying for them. They have been mortgaging them. What they do is, they don't pay cash like they did in the old days of government; they mortgage the future. They put a mortgage on everything, and that's what is happening year after year as we go forward. In fact, they're anticipating increasing the total debt by another \$5 billion next year. So every building, every school that's going up, every hospital, every bridge, and every highway is being mortgaged. They are not paying for it. This is a bad government.

**Mr. Pat Hoy:** I'm pleased to join again in commenting on Bill 35, the Investing in Ontario Act, at this time of its second reading.

This act is just an extension of what we've been doing with our municipal partners over our years as a government. We've been working hard with them on issues that are important to them and to the province and, more so, to the people in our own municipality—each and every one of us. We have been partnering with them to develop affordable and sustainable ways of funding services and ways of delivering them better and directly. Since 2003, we have more than doubled our support to municipal operating budgets. In 2008, this means that over \$2 billion in ongoing operating support will go to our municipalities. This is all very good news.

We are uploading ODSP and other costs from municipalities. We are saving more than \$935 million. It's a tremendous amount of money, a new breath of fresh air for municipalities as we work with them to upload what had been downloaded in the past. We have uploaded public health and land ambulance costs. We're delivering over \$1.6 billion in gas tax revenues to municipalities by 2010. Our Ontario municipal partnership fund is one that is important to many municipalities, no less so mine of Chatham-Kent-Essex. By the way, the Essex portion of my riding is Leamington, the tomato capital of Canada.

So these are all of benefit to the many ridings and municipalities they're in, and it doesn't end there. This year, over \$870 million was transferred to municipalities. It's an increase of 41% since 2004. These are huge numbers: a \$540-million cut to the BET, the business education taxes, for 321 municipalities, and the list goes on and on.

**Ms. Sylvia Jones:** I'm pleased to rise to speak on Bill 35. I think ultimately there are two reasons why we are debating this act tonight.

I have spoken to many municipalities in Dufferin-Caledon. I've spent the last weekend working the home show, and almost without exception, the mayors and the councillors all came up to me. They have concerns, and

the concern is that this bill gives them no planning ability. There is no vision in Bill 35.

There are two reasons why we have to talk about Bill 35.

The first is to legalize the end-of-year spending condemned by the Auditor General every year this government has been in power. Five years, and the Auditor General continues to raise his concerns with why they shovel out money at the end of the year without the proper controls. You got caught, and now Bill 35 is your way to solve it and your way to bring it forward for the next four years that you're in power.

The other reason we are debating Bill 35 tonight is because the Liberals want to remove a Progressive Conservative bill that mandated that all surplus must go to pay down the provincial debt. Our member from Carleton-Mississippi Mills raised a very important point that I don't want to get lost in this debate over Bill 35, and that is that right now, our provincial debt in Ontario is sitting at \$162 billion. That is an increase, and it is only going to continue to increase if we allow Bill 35 to be passed for the next mandate. You are pushing away the Progressive Conservative bill that said all surpluses must go to paying down the government debt.

**Hon. M. Aileen Carroll:** I think indeed we are trying to avoid the pedagogy of the opposition, just as we are attempting at every opportunity not to go down the same roads they went down when they formed the government of Ontario.

As a new member of provincial Parliament, the experience I've had in my constituency office, I think, is directly relevant to our discussions tonight. At every meeting that I have with people from the county, people from the city, it's a whole refreshing attitude. They come to tell me how different life has been for them during the last four years of this mandate vis-à-vis the years before, under Premiers Eves and Harris. Whether they're talking about affordable housing, whether they're talking about the environment or the reinvestment in education or the reinvestment in infrastructure, every meeting begins with, "Thank you. Life is so different for us now." Of course, I'm quick to say the thank-you is not mine, but belongs to the team I've now joined. Just to listen to the people who are impacted by the changes in the government's policies, by the whole new direction that this team on this side of the House has taken in reinvesting in government and in agencies throughout that were shredded by the former administration, is simply amazing.

So I have no difficulty at all endorsing this very balanced bill which addresses the debt and reinvests in the services that were so badly mauled by the government under the years of the Premiers who represented that side of the House.

It's my pleasure to join an incredible team in continuing to reinvest in Ontario and, by doing so, in our municipal infrastructure, our social housing, and everything that this bill relates to.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath):** Response?



**Ms. Helena Jaczek:** I'd like to thank the members for Carleton-Mississippi Mills, Chatham-Kent-Essex, Dufferin-Caledon and Barrie for their thoughtful comments.

I continue to be persuaded that this is an excellent bill. I think the comments related to what to date has been removed from the property tax bill, to the increased funding for public health, for land ambulance, the funding of the ODSP. These are all significant moves that have helped municipalities. This bill, as our Minister of Finance has said, is clearly another assistance to municipalities, in addition to so many other benefits that they've received through the McGuinty government.

I feel that in this climate, the type of prudent, well-balanced approach of paying down some of the debt and yet stimulating in the short term with these infrastructure projects definitely will bring new jobs to my riding, and, in the longer term, of course, is a real investment in our community. So, having heard all the comments, I remain committed to supporting Bill 35 as an excellent way of moving this province forward.

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**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath):** Further debate?

**Mr. Norman W. Sterling:** As you know, Madam Speaker, as you serve as one of the members of the public accounts committee, we sit with the auditor each week in that committee and are told each week that we want to call the government to account in that committee as we go forward. I guess what troubles me most about this particular bill is that it talks about reinvesting in Ontario, but really what it is, is a bill to allow the government to give unconditional grants out to anybody, maybe municipalities or maybe other non-profit groups as well, without any accountability.

I thought it would be helpful for people who might be listening to go over the process so people understand what, in fact, is happening here with regard to this bill. Our budget year starts on April 1 of each year and ends on March 31. The government brings its budget in at the late part of March for the upcoming year.

The way governments have made budgets in the past is that they estimate what the costs of running their operation are, creating new programs in the budget, increasing programs as we go forward. Then they calculate what that cost is going to be and calculate what the revenues are going to be for the upcoming year as well.

In this particular case, in terms of dealing with municipalities if they have a shortfall of money, I guess the most prudent thing for the government would be to create some kind of revenue stream that would be constant and consistent as we go through the years, so that in March of the year they would say to the municipal governments, "We will give you a certain percentage of the income tax of the government this year," or "We will give you a certain percentage of the sales tax," or whatever, if they wanted to help them out. That would be a constant stream of money to our municipalities that they could count on. This bill, as you know, guarantees nothing to the municipi-

palities at all. In fact, it says if there is not a surplus of \$800 million, they get nothing. If it goes over \$800 million, they can receive up to \$2 billion going forward.

The strange part of this bill is that it seems that the government is intent, as they have been in the past three or four years, on creating huge surpluses. When they get into the month of March, the last month of their financial year, they want to get rid of that money. Their first desire is to balance the budget and make certain that their revenue exceeds their expenses. But I get the impression from this government that they just want to get over that line. They don't want to create a surplus and restrain any expenses. We have seen this government, year after year, try to spend a great deal of money in the month of March. I'm going to quote what the auditor had to say over the last three years about that particular habit.

While the fiscal year ends on March 31, it's not until July or August, four or five months later, that an accurate accounting of the revenues and expenses takes place. While the government is in a pretty good position to try to estimate in March how much to flush out the door before March 31, they haven't got all the numbers in at that stage. But in July or August, a document comes out, produced by the internal auditors of the government, which has all of the columns added up, and it produces a number as to what the surplus is for the previous financial year.

Last year, that report came out in August, and much to the chagrin of the government, they ended up with too big a surplus, because the way they've acted in the past is, they just want to get over this line. They want to say they've balanced the budget, but they want to throw the rest of the money out to people in various different ways.

Last year, they created more than \$2.3 billion in debt, but they didn't think that they should pay down that debt first and then distribute the money later. At that point in August or July when the public accounts come out and they find they've got a surplus, the government has no choice what to do. They have to pay down the deficit. That's all they can do. They can't create new programs at that time and attribute them back to the previous financial year.

That's what this bill is about. This bill is about trying to say, "We get a number in August which is much higher than we thought, and we want to throw that money out in unconditional grants to either non-profit groups, municipalities or whomever." Interestingly enough, in Bill 35, they don't even mention municipalities. They mention other groups, but municipalities could be included in that group.

Why was it good last year that the \$2.3 billion went to pay down the debt? It's good because the \$2.3 billion that we paid down saved us \$135 million this year and will save us \$135 million dollars next year and each year after. I think we could increase the program for autistic children tremendously by an infusion of \$135 million dollars. But this government is intent on getting rid of all of the surplus without paying down the debt. They could save significant money going into the future.



Over the past three years, this government has made a huge effort to get rid of all of the balance of the budget. So each year, this government has written huge cheques, mostly to municipalities, in the last week of March. In fact, three years ago they wrote cheques to various rural municipalities across this province for roads and bridges. They did it so quickly, do you know what they did? They wrote cheques to counties that had no roads or bridges. Hastings and Frontenac counties both received cheques—one for \$1.6 million and the other one for over \$2 million—for roads and bridges. Oddly enough, Hastings and Frontenac don't have any roads or bridges to take care of. They're all taken care of by lower-tier municipalities. They were so anxious to get the money out that they couldn't do it competently. It's craziness.

As I mentioned before in one of my responses, they recently gave—in March of this year, a couple of weeks ago—to my city of Ottawa \$14.9 million for infrastructure. Number one, everybody else did better than the city of Ottawa in terms of what they got out of the slush fund at the end of the year. But number two, it illustrates exactly why this practice is bad. This practice is bad because the city gets \$14.9 million, ostensibly for infrastructure, and they can spend it on anything they want. Any municipality that received a cheque—\$450 million went out to various municipalities at the end of March. They said, "We'd like you to spend it on this or that," but if they don't spend it on that, there are no consequences. They don't have to give the money back. They could spend it on their operational budget and knock their tax rate down. So the tie between the government that collects the revenue and the spending of the money has been lost. That is very, very bad in terms of responsible government.

Is this practice wise? Our Auditor General certainly doesn't think so. He's spoken out against these unconditional year-end grants, which have been hurried out the door so they can be counted within the fiscal year's accounts. See, they want to increase their expenses at the end of March.

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I want to read from the Auditor General's 2005 report on this matter. This is the Auditor General speaking in his 2005 report:

"Based on a review of a number of transfer-payment transactions that occurred near the end of this fiscal year, we continue to have concerns in this area. Normally the government provides transfers to its service delivery partners on an as-needed basis. Operating transfers are generally provided over the course of the year as such funds are required to finance operations, and capital funds are normally provided on a cost-recovery basis as the transfer-payment recipient completes specific stages of a pre-approved capital project. However, just prior to or on March 31, 2005, the government entered into a number of transfer-payment arrangements and expensed the amounts involved, thereby increasing the deficit for the year by almost \$1 billion more than otherwise would have been the case. None of these transfers were origin-

ally planned for; that is, none had been included in the government's budget for the 2004-05 fiscal year, and in many cases, normal accountability and control provisions were reduced or eliminated to make the transfers 'unconditional,' thus helping ensure that they would qualify for immediate expensing."

Do you know what you have here? You have a government that is so driven to driving their expense column up, when they see they have a little extra money, rather than paying down the debt, they're willing to give this money out willy-nilly. That's essentially what the auditor says here in his criticism. You'd think that would be enough, but in 2006 Mr. McCarter repeated his condemnation of year-end spending sprees on page 343 of his 2006 report.

The Auditor General: "Again this fiscal year, we continue to have concerns, specifically regarding the relaxing of normal controls—shortly before the fiscal year-end"—that is before the March 31 deadline—"for unplanned transfers that the government makes to its service-delivery partners."

He continues:

"However, just prior to or on March 31, 2006, the government entered into a number of transfer-payment arrangements and expensed the amounts involved, thereby reducing the surplus for the year by almost \$1.6 billion more than otherwise would have been the case." If it weren't for the different numbers in the two quotes, you would think I'd just made a mistake in reading those numbers. But no, the government didn't listen to his comments in 2005; they're not listening to him in 2006.

Then, at the end of the fiscal year 2006-07, the government was caught handing out money by the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration without any application process or controls. The auditor was asked again. Let's see what Mr. McCarter had to say:

"In general, as we have noted in previous annual and other reports, year-end grant expenditures have involved reducing the controls normally in place for regular grant programs administered throughout the fiscal year." In that case, the year-end grants made headlines because of the ridiculousness of some of them, such as the \$1-million grant to the cricket association. Unfortunately, this government has demonstrated by the introduction of this bill that it not only intends to continue on with what they have done in the past, but they want to make it worse.

We all remember the scandal with regard to the year-end grants by the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, the fact that there were no application forms—some groups were notified and some weren't. There were no controls over the money. In fact, we know that in some cases the grants were much larger than those asked for.

What Bill 35 does is it gives the government another chance to do what it has been doing the last three years and has been criticized by the auditor each year for doing it. But it allows them to do it in such a fashion that there is no chance we could end up, as we did last year, with a



\$2.3-billion surplus, that would be used to pay down the debt this government is accumulating so quickly.

What that bill does is say that March 31 is no longer the deadline. We have four or five months after that in which we can still give away money from the previous expense year.

I think the government has some real problems with this particular bill. This bill has not been passed; it was not passed in the last fiscal year. In effect, what they're trying to do here now by passing this legislation—and, as you know, they have the majority to do so—is they're trying to go back and change the rules for the accounting procedure in the fiscal year 2007-08—last year, the one that just ended on March 31. I don't think they're going to get away with that and I don't think the auditors would look too kindly with regard to that particular matter.

This bill, I might add, is fashioned after a bill by a former Liberal Prime Minister, Paul Martin. But the difference with regard to what Mr. Martin did and what this government is trying to do here is that he passed the bill before the end of the fiscal year that they were trying to affect. So, Madam Speaker, not only do we have a bad bill, a bill which actually gets the government away from accountability for what they're doing with your money, my money and the taxpayers' money by handing it out to people on the basis of population or road miles or whatever the criteria are going to be—we don't know those criteria because, as my colleagues have mentioned before, this bill doesn't have much substance other than to give the cabinet, through the procedures of regulation, the power to make all the rules after the legislation has been passed.

The net effect of all of this, at the end, is this: Up to this point in our history in the Legislature, we have operated with the idea that the budget each year, as was read to us, tabled before us and passed before us in this Legislature, was an important document that would try to accurately reflect what the programs of the government would be and what the expected revenues of the government would be. The government then, as you know, tables the estimates, which define more closely what's in the budget. But with this kind of year-end spending which this government has undertaken, and now with this bill, one has to question whether the budget process is starting to lose the importance it has had in this institution for as long as it has; that is, why not just overtax the people? Why not just collect huge amounts of revenue and then sort of eyeball what the expenses might be? As long as you've overtaxed the people enough, you're going to end up with a pot of gold at the end, and then you just slush it out the door either before March 31 or in July or August of the year when the public accounts come.

The worst part of doing that is this: The recipients of that money, the slush funds, don't know if there's going to be money the next year or the year following. They all love getting a cheque; who doesn't love getting a cheque? They love getting unconditional cheques, as Ottawa did. They used it for clearing snow this past win-

ter. That's effectively what they've done with the \$14.9 million. It cost us something like \$23 or \$26 million extra this year in our snowplowing budget, because we just had huge amounts of snow. But that is not what a government's responsibility is to its provincial taxpayers. Our responsibility is to plan for the expenditures, collect enough revenue to cover those, pay down some of the debt and go home. It's not to create ideas for slush funds at the end of the year, extra lottery days at the end of the time.

The whole idea of government is being lost. Accountability is being lost in this bill; this bill has nothing to do with accountability. Perhaps the biggest irony in all of this is that it's called investing in Ontario. I don't consider giving money to the city of Ottawa to plow their streets in the winter to be investing in Ontario. I don't believe that.

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**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath):** Questions and comments? The member for Pickering–Scarborough East.

*Applause.*

**Mr. Wayne Arthurs:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's almost enough to keep you awake.

Just a couple of minutes after hearing from the member from—what is it? It's Carleton–Mississippi Mills, as he's referred to, one of the deans of the Legislature. He, for one, should know, as I know he does, how pleased municipalities are after so many years to have a real partner in government. It's no wonder they welcome cheques when they do arrive to help them with their infrastructure needs because they went so long without them. They'd almost forgotten what it was like to have partners in government. These past few years, they've had an opportunity now to begin to rebuild those relationships, both on the operating side and on the capital side.

I had the opportunity just a couple of weeks ago to be in one of the municipalities that I represent, the Pickering portion of my Pickering–Scarborough East riding, and presented a cheque—in effect, an opportunity for \$1 million to go towards a \$4-million project that they've had waiting for some years on the shelf to do. It's exactly those kinds of projects that Bill 35 is going to support. We were fortunate that we had a good fiscal year and we were able to share with our municipal partners and look for projects that were, in this instance, shelf-ready. If they're aware that, if we had a good year, they should share in that largesse at the year-end, they can make sure they're prepared and ready to go with projects that will serve their constituents well.

I'm looking forward to the continuing debate and, ideally, should this bill be passed, to the opportunity for our municipalities to be able to continue to do the good work they're doing on rebuilding the sorely neglected infrastructure of so many years.

**Ms. Lisa MacLeod:** I'm so happy to stand up and speak to the speech that my good colleague from Carleton–Mississippi Mills just made. He and I are two



defenders of the city of Ottawa when the other members from the city of Ottawa on the government side decide to sit silently.

*Interjection.*

**Ms. Lisa MacLeod:** I think that the Minister of Community and Social Services isn't in her seat, so if she wants to comment, maybe she'll want to sit there.

What's very important is this divesting in Ontario act, which is essentially a slush fund. Then we hear about all of these awful things with the previous Conservative government, and I'm really getting sick and tired of hearing that, because I look next door, right across the way, and I see the Minister of Culture with her hands there and I'm wondering how proud you must have been to serve under Prime Minister Chrétien and Prime Minister Martin when they consistently cut and slashed social and health transfers to this province, during the Harris government, and every other province across this country. You can't look at me and tell me that during the time you were in government, there weren't nurses' strikes—

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath):** Through the Chair, please.

**Ms. Lisa MacLeod:** I'm sorry, Madam Speaker. It's just the height of hypocrisy of the folks over there, who hear no evil, who see no evil, and they don't know how to put a good budget bill together, or a supplementary bill to their budget, to help the people in the province of Ontario. The people who cut and slashed in this province the worst were Mr. Martin and Mr. Chrétien when they were the dynamic duo of Prime Minister and finance minister of this country. What they did to the Harris government between 1995 and 2003 was unbelievable. Quite frankly, we're fond of the fact that right now we're restoring what was intended under the Constitution Act by the Harper government, which is the proper funding roles and proper jurisdictions.

It's always great to hear them all talk over there, but quite honestly they'd better start doing a little bit of listening too.

**Hon. Monique M. Smith:** I'm very pleased today to speak to this bill that we are debating. I am very pleased to respond to some of the comments from the member from Carleton-Mississippi Mills, who is in fact an institution in this House, notwithstanding his bold comment tonight of referring to our government as a bad, bad government. He was in fact a member here when I was a page, so that gives you some indication of how long the member for Carleton-Mississippi Mills has been around. I've been waiting a long time to be able to say that.

I'm particularly pleased to be discussing this bill where we are looking to reinvest in our municipalities. My municipalities in the riding of Nipissing have benefited tremendously from our government and the McGuinty investments that have been made here. Previously, we were represented by a member of the Conservative government, actually the Premier of the Conservative government, who delivered nothing to my riding. The poor folks in Nipissing waited a long, long time for a hospital; we're building that hospital. The poor folks in Mattawa

waited over 30 years for a hospital; we're building that hospital. The four-laning of Highway 11 was started before my father was a member in the 1950s. Mr. Sterling might remember that—sorry, the member for Carleton-Mississippi Mills; it's a long name. That started in the 1950s, slowed right down during the reign of the Conservative government, and it is now back on track, due to be finished in 2012.

We are particularly proud of the investments we're making in roads and bridges across my riding, particularly the ones that were announced recently, through the municipal infrastructure funding and through the bridges and roads funding of the budget in March.

My municipality of East Ferris, represented by Mayor Bill Vrebosch, is receiving funding for Deerland Road. I have to tell you that one of the residents on Deerland Road was quoted on the front page of the Nugget as saying, "It's a dream come true," to hear that her road is finally being fixed, after years of neglect. This is a direct result of the investments of the McGuinty government, investments that we are proud to make in partnership with our municipalities, who were long ignored by the previous government.

**Mr. Bill Murdoch:** We're here tonight to listen to—we hope that the Liberals are going to listen to some sense.

Here you are, making a bill to make slush-funding legal. You got away with it before when you started giving to the cricket club and all that nonsense. You got away with it, so you thought: "Gee, you know, we might not get away with that for a second time. We'd better make a bill on this. Because we have the vast majority of people here, we can do whatever we want in here." And that's what you're doing.

It's great to hear one member over there—he used to be a mayor of a municipality—say, "Oh, well, the municipalities, sure, they're going to take the money." But your bill doesn't say they're going to get the money; it doesn't say that. So when you come to the year-end and you have this big slush fund again, you're going to start saying: "Who supports us out there? Who are the members who support us? Well, there's a cricket club, or there's a basketball club. Maybe we can send them the money." There's no guarantee in this bill for that.

So, you guys, it's nuts what you're trying to do over there, to make a bill so you can have a slush fund. Have you ever heard of anything like that? This even beats out the Liberals in Ottawa. I mean, you talk about them, and you couldn't have had a more corrupt bunch, and now you're sending some of them in here, but they were the most corrupt bunch we ever had up in Ottawa. Now you guys are saying: "We can do better than that. We'll make bills that make all this stuff legal." Next you'll be able to say—when we come in here, you'll want to charge us coming through the door, "so we can give it out to all our friends."

All this is is a bill so you think you can keep yourselves elected, be able to take whatever slush fund, whatever you can siphon off and flush it out the door. It's like



flushing a toilet. All you people want to do is flush money: tax people, tax them even more and then give it back to them. They'll catch you on your little game, you know. People aren't that stupid out there. All it is is you're giving them back their own money. It has nothing to do with you people at all. All you're doing is creating a bill that allows you to flush money out the door.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath):** Response?

**Mr. Norman W. Sterling:** I think the members know that this is a bill about getting away from accountability rather than going towards accountability.

One of the interesting parts is that the members over there are talking about these municipal projects, but we have to look to the bottom lines of the budget. The fact of the matter is that the hospital in North Bay and those roads that you spoke about—the money that all of these municipalities received is borrowed money. It's not extra money; it's borrowed money.

The government, according to their own document, their budget, have increased their debt by \$5.5 billion. All of these projects together—Ontario highways, municipal highways, the schools, the hospitals—the total number on that is around \$7.5 billion. How much did they pay? They paid \$2 billion of the \$7.5 billion. The rest of it is borrowed.

**2000**

They want to talk about the fact that they are building them. You're not building them. It's my kids and my grandkids who are building those, because you're creating taxes for them. That's what you're doing. You're mortgaging our future at a faster and faster pace, and you're going to continue doing that, because you've predicted this year you're going to borrow another \$5 billion.

Why don't you use the money that you have now to pay for what you're building now? Then people would say you're a financially prudent government. You're not. You are a terrible government, in terms of finances. With that, I'll leave this debate.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath):** Further debate?

**Mrs. Christine Elliott:** I do appreciate the opportunity to add some comments to the excellent points made by my colleagues here in the Legislature, the member from Nepean—Carleton and the member for Carleton—Mississippi Mills.

I said earlier, at the outset of this debate, that if ever there was a cynical piece of business, Bill 35 is one such piece. There's so much that you can talk about on so many levels that's bad about this bill.

Let's start with the statement that was made by the Minister of Finance at a press conference on March 12 this year that the Ontario government would be proposing legislation that would dedicate a portion of future surpluses to Ontario's municipalities to address infrastructure needs, such as improving roads and bridges, expanding transit and upgrading social housing. He also said that for surpluses of \$800 million or greater, \$600

million would go to debt repayments and the rest would go to municipal infrastructure. Well, conveniently, this year the government is only expecting a surplus of \$600 million, so for the fiscal year 2007-08 the municipalities aren't going to receive anything.

We've heard a lot of talk about how much money the municipalities have received this year, but in fact, as we know, that is one-time spending only. That's not likely to be repeated, certainly not this year or for the years to come, because this also assumes that the growth of the province is going to be proceeding along the lines that were anticipated by the ministry in the forecasts they've made, which may be somewhat rosy and probably are going to be somewhat rosy, given the economic storm clouds on the horizon. But that's something that this government refuses to speak about. They refuse to listen to the sensible voices that are telling them that we're about to have a huge economic downturn.

They're not doing anything to address the issues of the jobs that are running out of this province in droves, that are putting Ontarians out of work, because of the uncertainty that this government has created by having a lack of reliable energy that new businesses can count on, by not reducing the regulatory red tape that businesses face when they come into this province and, probably most importantly, by refusing to address the necessary tax reductions for businesses that would make Ontario an attractive province for businesses to come and invest in. We know that this is being done by governments across Canada of every political stripe. It's not just Conservative governments that are doing this; it's Liberal and NDP governments that are doing it, as well. But, for some reason, the McGuinty Liberals just don't want to come to grips with this and don't want to be honest with the people of Ontario about it.

As I said before, that's what the minister said on March 12.

But let's consider what the legislation itself actually says. Unfortunately, I need to use my glasses for this. Let's look, first of all, at what payments can be made. I'd like to quote from section 2 of Bill 35, which says, "The Minister of Finance may, out of money appropriated therefor by the Legislature and in accordance with this act and the regulations, make payments in respect of a fiscal year beginning on or after April 1, 2007 to eligible recipients on such terms and conditions as the minister considers advisable."

Next we go to section 1(2) of the act, which defines "eligible recipient." Here's where the devil is in the details. "Eligible recipient" means a person or entity, other than an individual but including a partnership whose members may be individuals, that does not carry on activities for the purpose of gain or profit."

Not anywhere in any of those definitions do you hear anything about municipalities. In fact, these payments can be made to whomever this government deems worthy of payments at the end of the year. It could be, for example, a cricket club or any other such organization. This could really have the effect of keeping municipalities in



line. Although we hear a lot about how this government wants to be partners with municipalities, in reality they're taking them for a ride and holding out the carrot: "If you are good, you'll receive some of these monies at the end of the year." But if they go offside, then they're probably not going to get those monies. So we have sort of an implied threat hanging over the heads of municipalities, and I think our municipal partners deserve better. They are acting in good faith, and they do expect this government, quite rightly, to live up to its promises. But I fear they are going to be disappointed, and it's not fair to them or to the taxpayers of Ontario.

In essence, we're coming back, as other members have pointed out here, to a legalized slush fund. As the member for Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound has indicated, you were likely to get in trouble about this—the Auditor General has repeatedly criticized you for these payments that you make out of end-of-year funds—so the only way to deal with it is to legalize your slush fund. That's the way we have it here. The Auditor General has criticized you repeatedly about it, and that's what we've got.

As the member from Niagara West-Glanbrook said earlier in the debate, "So I suspect that what we're actually seeing here today is a Liberal attempt to get around the Auditor General's review by deciding within cabinet which municipalities get the funding and how much. It's all done by regulations, as the minister knows. I think what we're going to see, actually, is another Liberal slush fund outside of the accountability parameters. As Dalton McGuinty himself likes to say, 'We've seen this movie before.'" How true: We have, with these cynical moves that are being made by this government.

Besides legalizing a slush fund, what else is this bill going to do? It insults the intelligence of all our municipal leaders by promising something that's probably not going to happen. We know it's not going to happen this year, we can pretty much assume it's not going to happen next year and, if the economic downturn happens as predicted, it's not going to happen for several years to come. This was noted by Mississauga Councillor Carolyn Parrish, who noted about this government, "They are playing games with us." What an indictment from a so-called municipal partner. She's not believing any of this, and I don't blame her. She said that some members are "willing to take crumbs," but she's not. So she's standing up to this, and she's making comments that I think ring true with many other municipal leaders across our province.

What they need is stable, long-term, predictable funding, not something that may happen, could happen or, if all the circumstances are right, is going to happen. As our leader, John Tory, has called it, it really is a crapshoot from year to year whether the municipalities are going to get the funding they need or not. That's not the way to be dealing with municipal partners. They have ongoing needs: road repair, bridge repair, infrastructure needs. They have to have some kind of certainty, from year to year, so that they can plan accordingly. But the McGuinty Liberals aren't willing to deal with this. They want to talk about partnerships with municipal leaders,

but they're not willing to treat them with the respect they deserve and give them the funding they need on an on-going basis.

The other thing we have here is the whole issue of debt repayment, and that's something the member from Carleton-Mississippi Mills dealt with in some detail in his comments. It was also pointed out by our member from Niagara West-Glanbrook in his earlier comments with respect to this bill when he talked about debt payment. He commented: "Because as the minister knows, debt has gone up under the McGuinty government by some \$13 billion. We are now \$162 billion in debt. That costs an interest payment of \$9 billion per year, or \$1 million per hour, that could go into tax reductions or needed programs, but instead they're backtracking on any plan to pay down the debt."

#### 2010

I'd just like to spend a few minutes on that, because there are significant ramifications, both long- and short-term, to having to pay off \$1 million an hour in debt. The long-term ramifications are of course the fact that our children and our grandchildren are going to be saddled with this debt. That's going to prevent them from being able to move forward on needed programs because they are going to be hobbled with this debt. I think any responsible government would realize this and take steps to reduce the amount of the debt, not increase the amount of the debt.

That's something my children are going to have to deal with. I have three 17-year-old sons who are, right now, looking forward to university programs. At some point, they're going to be the leaders of tomorrow. The member from Nepean-Carleton and many of the other members in this House want to be able to leave a legacy for their children that they can be proud of. That's not the case with this government.

But let's look at the short-term ramifications. The short-term ramifications of having to pay \$1 million an hour toward the debt each and every hour mean that we have to spend money servicing this debt that could be going into many programs that we need here in the province of Ontario. So to a lot of people, it may be sort of an ephemeral concept: "Oh, well, so we have this debt. What does it really matter? We'll just keep accumulating it." It has real effects on the bottom line and the ability of the government to deliver the programs we need.

There are many programs we could talk about that are going to be adversely affected by this additional debt, but probably the biggest amount that we spend with our tax dollars here in the province of Ontario is toward health care. What are the ramifications of not being able to put more money into health care? There are so many.

First of all, if I look at my own region, the region of Durham, of which Whitby-Oshawa is a part, we are underfunded for hospital health care. Never mind all the other ancillary health care that goes along with it, the children's treatment centres, mental health services in the community and so on. We're looking at actual hospital health care, and we are underfunded by over \$200 per



person compared to the provincial average. That is fundamentally unfair in a region that's one of the fastest-growing regions in Ontario, where the taxpayers pay the same amount of taxes as the other taxpayers in the province. We pay the health tax, as does everybody else, but I don't think there's a single person in Durham region who would say that we're receiving better-quality health care for the additional tax we're paying. We're paying hundreds and hundreds of dollars per person more and yet we're consistently being underfunded by more and more.

The gap is growing in Durham region, and this is having a huge effect on the health care needs of the people in Durham region and specifically in Whitby–Oshawa. We had a very big issue that's come up quite recently with respect to the Rouge Valley Health Corp.

**Ms. Lisa MacLeod:** What are they doing about it?

**Mrs. Christine Elliott:** They're doing terrible things. Thank you for asking. They are forcing the hospital board of Rouge Valley Health Corp. and the Central East LHIN to cut their budgets to meet the accountability agreements that the Minister of Health is forcing all the hospitals across the province to sign in order to receive funding for the upcoming year; this in an area where we're already significantly underfunded, where's there's been a promise that's been made that we're going to be receiving money for population-growth-based care, but the ministry hasn't even allocated that money yet. So they're asking hospital corporations to plan in a vacuum, but telling them that they need to balance their books on the basis of what they have now.

The ramifications of that in Durham region are going to be huge. Even though the Ajax hospital is not located within my riding, we have heard the member from Ajax–Pickering speak out on this and also reading petitions against the planned closure of beds and the transfer of all the in-patient mental health beds from the Ajax hospital to Scarborough Centenary Hospital. This is going to have serious effects on the health of our residents. Many people from my riding of Whitby–Oshawa also go to the Ajax hospital to receive treatment.

We actually had a public town hall meeting last Thursday evening in Ajax where over 1,000 people showed up to voice their concerns about these in-patient mental health beds being transferred to the Scarborough site, because it's not just a situation of maintaining that service within that hospital corporation. What we have here is a situation where people have to cross a boundary. That's a huge boundary to cross between Durham region into the city of Toronto's boundaries because it affects which ambulance service transfers those patients, which transit system people use in order to even manoeuvre themselves across Durham region. It's difficult without trying to connect the city of Toronto's transit system. So we've got all of those jurisdictional issues, with police response and emergency care people, trying to deal with that, which is sort of being dealt with as a small issue in terms of transportation.

We certainly heard from many of the speakers who came out to the meeting last Thursday night to talk about how damaging that transfer is going to be for people who are experiencing a mental health crisis. Many of the consumers who came out to speak said that if you're experiencing a crisis, you don't want to have to spend overnight in the emergency room of the Ajax hospital, wait 12 hours and then be transferred to Toronto the next day.

If you're in crisis, you need to be seen immediately by accomplished professionals—you need the treatment that you need. Waiting until the next day and saying that those services are going to be available at Scarborough Centenary—while it's a wonderful hospital, it's just not close enough to serve the needs of Durham region citizens. Peer and family support is so important here. You really need to have friends and family able to access those services easily, and that's not going to happen. We've urged the Minister of Health, and I urge the member from Ajax–Pickering to continue his advocacy with the Minister of Health, to urge him not to do this, to put some of that growth-based funding into alleviating the situation so that these much-needed in-patient mental health beds will not be transferred.

**Ms. Lisa MacLeod:** What they're doing is a shame, by the way.

**Mrs. Christine Elliott:** It's terrible and it is going to really have a significant effect on the quality of services that are going to be offered in Durham region.

The other major health corporation we now have in Durham region is the Lakeridge Health Corporation. Lakeridge Health Oshawa is currently operating at 100% capacity and they send their overflow to the Ajax hospital. How is this expected to work? Are they going to send people from Clarington to Scarborough for treatment? We heard time and time again from people: That's simply not going to happen. People are either not going to go for treatment because they fear they're not going to be able to receive treatment at their local hospital, or they're going to go to Oshawa, which is already overflowing. What are they going to do? There are some significant issues here. The issue of what we can do in order to deal with the ramifications from this bill and the implications of not being able to have enough money to spend because you're spending on debt repayment is very significant.

One other area I would like to speak about on programs that can't be implemented for this reason again relates to mental health, and I would just like to comment on the excellent work that they're doing federally. As you know, the Kirby report was issued in the spring of 2006. It was an excellent report that called for the development of a national mental health strategy. To their credit, the government has appointed money from two budgets since then. In the 2007 budget they allocated \$55 million to set up the commission to start its work. In the most recent budget, 2008, they allocated \$110 million to research pilot projects on mental health problems and homelessness in five cities across Canada. This is something that's excellent.



What we really need is for the Ontario government to step up to the plate. I note that there was one line in the 2008 budget that dealt with this. It said they “will be developing a comprehensive mental health ... strategy.” We haven’t heard a word about it. There have been no definite monies committed to this, there have been no timelines, there are no outlines of what they hope to achieve. So again we’re hearing lip service to all of this.

There is so much fragmentation in the way we deliver mental health services in Ontario; there are so many areas that are crying out for need. Every year we see a different area being addressed. One year it’s community mental health. One year it’s children’s mental health. All of them are valid. All of them are important. But what we really need to do is coordinate the delivery of the services: to figure out what the federal government is delivering—they deliver some services to certain groups of people in the armed forces and so on—and look at what we’re delivering provincially. We need to develop a comprehensive strategy to deal with mental illness, which is threatening to become an epidemic, certainly in pediatrics. The number of people who have come to see me in my community office about mental health issues affecting children is frightening.

2020

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath):** Can you bring that back to the bill?

**Mrs. Christine Elliott:** I’m bringing it all back to the whole issue of being unable to spend money on these quality programs because we’re spending so much money to service the debt. That’s something this government seems to have no problem with: spending billions and billions more dollars—money we don’t have. We had it when times were good, but times are not going to be as good in the next few years. I ask the members of the McGuinty government, what’s the plan? As we’ve seen with many other things, what’s the plan for dealing with the economy? We haven’t seen action on that. What’s the plan for coordinating health care services? What’s the plan for dealing with our transportation and infrastructure systems that are crying out in need of repair? We need to have a plan. It’s not just a question of spending money; it’s knowing how you’re going to spend it, what the result will be and, finally, being accountable to the taxpayers of Ontario, who, after all, deserve that for the hard-earned money they pay in taxes.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath):** Questions and comments?

**Hon. Michael Gravelle:** I have been sitting here all evening, as most of us have, and I’m finding myself mystified by the official opposition, listening to them, quite frankly, show their lack of support for the needs of municipalities across this province. Here we have a piece of legislation that once again will find some way to help municipalities in the very difficult times they face, related to infrastructure.

Then, of course, I realized that I have to go back. I was one of those who were elected in 1995, and I sat here through the 1995 to 2003 period, particularly the 1995 to

1999 period when the municipalities were under attack every day by the Conservative government of the day. The fact is that they were beaten up pretty badly. Certainly, since we came to power in 2003, we’ve developed an entirely different relationship with municipalities based on an understanding that there is a tremendous infrastructure deficit in this province. We recognize, as do they, that you can’t fix that overnight; there’s no question about it.

There are real challenges out there, but there have been a number of programs that we put in place over the last four and a half to five years that basically are a reflection of the needs that are met by municipalities. Certainly, the MIII program announcement, which just came out a month or so ago, was very significant in terms of helping infrastructure, and I presume that my colleague for Whitby—Oshawa and the other members of the official opposition were supportive of that program.

What this legislation will do, quite frankly, is put in place the balance we need. Debt reduction will be in place up to the \$800-million figure, and above that, we will be providing infrastructure funds to municipalities. You tend to focus on the fact that there are no specifics, but the fact is, it’s very clear to municipalities. They have learned to trust us. They have learned to work with us. They certainly didn’t have trust for you. Certainly, I am absolutely delighted to stand here and support this legislation and, as I said, I’m mystified, shaken, but perhaps ultimately not surprised by the lack of support by the opposition.

**Mr. Robert Bailey:** I’d like to commend the speaker for Whitby—Oshawa, who expanded on the remarks of the member for Carleton—Mississippi Mills. It’s nice to hear the opposition acknowledging his long tenure and service in this Legislature. I didn’t realize that he was here long enough that some people were actually pages and went on to be elected later on. Anyway, that’s interesting. I also had the opportunity to hear the remarks by the member from Nepean—Carleton.

There are a number of shortcomings in this Bill 35, as people have spoken to: the lack of long-term, stabilized, assured funding for municipalities, which is something they look forward to. The way it is now, it’s going to be like a lottery process, and they’re always going to be wondering if they’re going to be receiving that kind of money.

**Mr. Garfield Dunlop:** It’s like a casino.

**Mr. Robert Bailey:** As the member says, it’s like going to the casino and pulling that arm.

I’d also like to speak to the fact that as we move forward, we need to look at whether there are changes we can make that could guarantee this funding for these municipalities to make infrastructure repairs. I was just reading in the paper today that in the Chatham-Kent area they had a bridge collapse and they’re wondering how they’re going to fund the repairs. There is probably a lot of other infrastructure throughout the province that is in that same case.

At this time, I’d like to conclude my remarks.



**Hon. Christopher Bentley:** It gives me great pleasure to speak in support of this bill, because it will continue the progress that our government's been making since 2003 in investing in communities.

With the greatest of respect to the comments from the member from Whitby—Oshawa, the people of London do not want to go back to where we were. They remember governments before 2003 that forgot London completely. I'll give you a simple example. The municipal partnership funding, which was invested to make up for the social services that the others across the floor had down-loaded: London was one of the few communities that got nothing, but under our government, \$14 million this year. Roads and bridges: roads funding totalling about \$20 million in the last two and a half years. That wasn't the experience they had before. Public transit funding: this year alone, \$9 million in gas tax funding, plus \$6 million for infrastructure, plus tens of millions of dollars that London has received for buses, paid for by the province of Ontario—all to support additional public transit in the community.

I didn't mention the \$11 million we just announced, with my colleagues Khalil Ramal and Deb Matthews, for Innovation Park, which will provide for service lands for jobs in our community. It goes along with the other investments we have been making in employment, whether it be through Diamond Aircraft; Toyota, just up the road; the extra shift at CAMI; or the Cakerie, most recently.

This is a good bill. It continues to move us in the right direction, investing in communities; not, as others have done in the past, taking out of communities. It's good for the people of Ontario, good for the people of London and good for the people of London West. I'm pleased to support it.

**Ms. Lisa MacLeod:** I want to congratulate my colleague from Whitby—Oshawa. Clearly this budget is not doing very much to address the issues that she's confronting within her community.

I just want to go back to Nepean—Carlton, where I represent a very fast-growing community—the largest community in terms of growth outside of the GTA. Our community has identified a major infrastructure project called the Strandherd-Armstrong bridge. It's a \$35-million commitment on the part of the province. Right now, the federal government has put forward its \$35 million. The city of Ottawa has put aside its \$35 million for this \$105-million bridge. We are still waiting for the McGuinty Liberals to pony up their \$35 million for this bridge.

It's a critical infrastructure project. It's going to unite two communities across the mighty Rideau River. They're two fast-growing communities, Riverside South and South Nepean. It will be a very important link that will run bus rapid transit, which is going to be integral as our community grows.

Unfortunately, there are two problems: First, it was so last-minute that it had no strings attached and ended up going where it wasn't intended to go; the second part is, the city of Ottawa received \$14.9 million, far short of the

\$35 million which is needed to build this critical piece of infrastructure for my community.

This week, I'm going to have an opportunity to put forward a resolution to request that the McGuinty Liberals step up to the plate to build that bridge. I'm going to need them to put aside their partisanship to understand that we need to build the bridge in Nepean—Carleton. It's time to build bridges.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath):** Response?

**Mrs. Christine Elliott:** I appreciate the opportunity to make some concluding remarks. I would just like to pick up on one point that was made by the Minister of Northern Development and Mines, who indicated that our municipal partners trust us. You know, I say that they might trust you now, but they're not going to for too much longer. Yes, they received a lot of money this year, because they need it—it's about time, they're deserving of it—but that's where it's going to stop, because you know very well that there's not going to be any money to give out at the end of next year, or the year after, or the year after.

**2030**

Really, this whole promise of, "If it goes over a certain limit, you're going to get the rest of it," is just a ruse. You're just saying this because you want them to believe that you really are their partners, that you really are going to do something for them. But let's face it, the way this economy is going, there's not going to be a surplus of that amount. You're telling them what they desperately need to believe, but they're going to find out at the end of the day that the cupboard's going to be bare, there's not going to be anything for them, when what they really need, as you well know, is stable, long-term, predictable funding that's going to allow them to plan for their future. You can't plan in a vacuum. We've still got to deal with what services are going to be uploaded and how much and by whom. That report has yet to be completed. We're waiting till the summer for that.

The other shoe has to drop here. We've got lots of other issues that remain to be determined that our municipal partners don't know about yet. They're about to find out, and I don't think that trust is going to be there for too much longer. I see my colleagues here are definitely in agreement.

So what we have is another situation where you're saying one thing, but in reality, what we're still having is just a roll of the dice: Is there going to be money at the end of the day, and not only that, if there is money at the end of the day, are the municipalities going to receive it? Because the legislation doesn't require that. There's no indication that that's going to be the case except on your say-so so far, and I don't think you've got much credibility with the people of Ontario on that.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath):** Further debate?

**Mr. Garfield Dunlop:** I'm very pleased to rise tonight to speak on Bill 35, An Act to authorize the Minister of Finance to make payments to eligible recipients—



which is anybody—out of money appropriated by the Legislature and to amend the Fiscal Transparency and Accountability Act, 2004, the Ministry of Treasury and Economics Act and the Treasury Board Act, 1991. It sounds pretty important. By the way, we won't be supporting this, as you can probably tell.

First of all, we had an evening here last week in the Legislature when there was a reception downstairs to promote adding women into the provincial Legislature. I have to say, we've seen tonight in our caucus—and I compliment all the women who are in the Legislature. But I think you've seen the calibre of people we've attracted to our caucus: Lisa MacLeod, the member from Nepean–Carleton; Christine Elliott, the member from Whitby–Oshawa.

I thought the comment made by Christine when she talked about her triplets—

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath):** Can I just ask the member to please address the other members by their ridings?

**Mr. Garfield Dunlop:** What's that?

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath):** The tradition is to address the members by their ridings and not their names.

**Mr. Garfield Dunlop:** Okay, I'm sorry—the member from Whitby–Oshawa and the member from Nepean–Carleton.

The member from Whitby–Oshawa is very proud of her triplets, and she wondered about them being the leaders of tomorrow, and I teased her a little bit after, saying “Well, how could they possibly have any leadership abilities?” Imagine a family where the father is the federal Minister of Finance and the mother is a solid member of a provincial caucus at Queen's Park. I just think that there are probably tremendous abilities there.

Following me, later on, will be the member from Dufferin–Caledon, who is originally from my riding and has just done a phenomenal job. I've got to tell you, there are probably more people in my riding watching the member from Dufferin–Caledon than are watching me, because they are so proud of her. She's got such an outstanding family in our community, who are proud of her as well.

I just want to say, that is how proud we are of our caucus members—and I hope all the members in the House are as proud of all their caucus members. But I think they've done a great job here tonight, and we'll look forward to the comments made by the member from Dufferin–Caledon in a few minutes.

By the way, I am amazed that the government hasn't put up more speakers tonight. If they're so proud of this legislation, you'd think they'd want to talk about it forever, but no, we're not hearing that. They give these little jibes and pretend that they care about the bill.

One of the things we haven't heard a lot about this evening is debt and the way we've increased spending in the province of Ontario, and I think the people at home should know about this. I don't see any fancy brochures, and it's certainly not put out in their press releases. From

1867 to 2003—that's how long it took to get the provincial spending to \$67 billion. And from 2003 to 2008, under Dalton McGuinty, we've now gone to \$96 billion. That's a \$29-billion increase in spending in that time which translates into 41%, as you're well aware.

If you take that from every man, woman and child, that means that the McGuinty Liberals, in each and every year they've been in power, have increased spending in the province of Ontario by around \$400, for a total of about \$2,600 for every man woman and child over that five-year period. So we should see money flowing to London, to North Bay and to Ottawa, and all these areas. We should see a lot of money flowing, because the taxpayers have been asked to spend that money. The government is trying to find \$96 billion, so we should see those improvements. We have seen some improvements in some capital projects, but those like this one—the member from Sarnia–Lambton talked about it earlier. We talked about it: It was like going to the casino. That's the position the government has put municipalities in.

First of all, there is no guarantee that it's going to municipalities; we know that. If they get mad at the Association of Municipalities of Ontario and they want to create a vendetta against them, they can put that money into something else. If in fact there was a surplus at the end of the year, they could put that into agriculture, for example, which they never would, because usually we cut money in agriculture. But the reality is that this government has this bill before the House with no guarantees that that money will flow to the municipalities. If a municipality has spent all the money on the engineering and the planning, and at the end of the year there just might be some money left over, then they would get it.

If there were any amendments made and we're actually going to committee with this bill, I would hope that you would, at least on this part of the bill, say, “Yes, the municipalities do get the money each and every year if there is a surplus, the way it is right now.” So that would be an amendment that I'd be prepared to make on behalf of our caucus, to say, “Make sure that the municipalities get it.” And if they're so pleased with the comments they've heard from their municipal partners, surely the government would accept that as an amendment. So I'm looking forward to making that amendment at clause-by-clause or committee hearings whenever we get to it.

We've just got to get back to the spending. For a \$29-billion increase in five years of spending, are we getting value for money? Is the money being spent wisely, efficiently and effectively in every way? The answer is no.

I have more people today coming into my constituency offices looking for a family physician than ever before. On the weekend, I was at a home show. We had a small booth at a spring home show, and the number of people who came to me and complained about the long-term-care facilities was absolutely unbelievable. I thought at first there must be something going on in the city: Why is everyone complaining about long-term-care facilities? But I got talking to a couple of the owners of some of the facilities. There's a problem out there.



There's a huge problem with lack of funding for these facilities. A lot of them are really upset with the minister because of his comments over the diaper issue a little earlier in the year. That was something that I heard a lot of.

The reality is that there are some huge, huge problems out there still. We've seen some money flow to some of the municipalities. I was pleased. How could you not be happy if some money flowed to your municipality? You can't sit and criticize the government for everything. But what I want to know is, is the money being wisely spent—the \$29 billion? As the member from Carleton-Mississippi Mills had mentioned earlier, we'll have some problems in the future—as we look forward to what kind of a debt we are leaving our children and what kind of a problem we're going to have as we enter this economic downturn.

I understand that this economic downturn will not be Dalton McGuinty's fault; it will be the Bush administration's fault, it will be the next administration after Mr. Bush, it will be the Harper administration, it will be the price of oil—it will be the fault of anybody but Dalton McGuinty, and that's wrong.

Up until 2003, the province of Ontario drove the national economy. We were the engine that made Canada strong, and now we are the weakest link in that economy. That is the problem—we've got a huge problem.

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I was really happy tonight when a few people mentioned the support of the federal government, because they certainly haven't been given credit here in this House. Let's talk about that for a second. Let's talk about the \$3.1 billion from the federal government that's sitting on the table for infrastructure assistance under the Building Canada fund. This government has not signed on to that. That \$3.1 billion is one third of the amount of money over seven years—it's a seven-year program—that would translate into \$9.3 billion if the Ontario government and the municipalities signed on to it. Imagine what \$9.3 billion in infrastructure assistance would do over seven years.

It's a finger-pointing game; we've seen a lot of that. The reality is, if the Ontario government signed on, that money would not be \$600 million or a lottery or something we got at the casino at the end of the year; it would be consistent, long-term, stable funding over a seven-year period. That's what we would get from the federal government if the Ontario government signed on to the Building Canada fund.

On top of that, we've got things like the \$311 million that's flowing to training, colleges and universities this year. That's new money from the federal government that's coming to this government under the labour market agreement. I know that a lot of that money was already used up in the budget under the retraining programs, and they bragged about that. But the reality is that we need to spend a lot of that \$311 million at our community colleges and universities, and we need to spend a lot of it on apprenticeships and that whole program as well.

That brings me to another point—a sore point—and I can't understand why the government won't move on this. It's the whole issue around apprenticeship ratios. There's a strong lobby out there right now, as we know, to have the Ontario government reduce the ratio to 1:1. For every journeyman tradesperson you have in the construction industry, you could have one apprentice. If you have five journeymen, you could have five apprentices. That's not the way it is now; it's 3:1. If you have nine journeymen, you end up with three apprentices. There's something wrong with that. In every other province in the dominion, it's 1:1.

We've got this lobby out there, and I know that we're going to continue to push for it. We're going to continue to ask the minister for it. If we're going to talk about retraining people and adding new jobs in Ontario, this is one area where we can make a huge improvement very quickly. I understand that today there are more auto mechanics over the age of 55 than under the age of 55. That came out of the census figures provided by the federal government six or seven weeks ago. The fact of the matter is that drawing young people and retraining people in some of these positions is an area we absolutely have to advance on.

The government is trying to say it's a safety issue. How can it be a safety issue only in Ontario and not in Alberta, British Columbia or Manitoba? In every other place, the journeyman ratio is 1:1. It's a place where we have to start. If the government wanted to make a really neat regulation change someday, we would support that change in a second, because that would add an ability for a lot of young people to enter trades. I'm not talking about the pre-apprenticeship programs; I'm not talking about the Ontario youth apprenticeship program. I'm talking about tradespeople who are actually able to sign on the dotted line—they are now full-fledged apprentices—and work for the next four or four and a half years, take their training at a community college and, at the end of that time, write an exam and become full-fledged tradespeople. That's something that I think this government has to make a move on. If you're looking at times when you're trying to retrain people, the timing is perfect for you to make those final changes—it's almost like a perfect storm. I would applaud the government if they were to move forward with that.

There are a number of other areas I would like to talk about, but I wanted to speak for a moment about policing.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath):** Are all these areas related to the bill we're discussing?

**Mr. Garfield Dunlop:** Oh, absolutely.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath):** I'd like to see the member come back to the bill from time to time.

**Mr. Garfield Dunlop:** Madam Speaker, where I'm going with this is very simple. We're talking about a bill—what's it called, what's this thing called at the end here?

**Ms. Lisa MacLeod:** Divesting.



**Mr. Garfield Dunlop:** It's the Investing in Ontario Act. Maybe we should call it the "It's Worth the Drive to Acton" bill. Do you remember there used to be the Olde Hide House there, and everybody went to the Olde Hide House to buy their leather goods? Well, there's no Olde Hide House anymore. They've gone under. They're not around anymore in Ontario. Do you remember how we used to go down Yonge Street—investing in Ontario?—and there was Sam the Record Man? It's all boarded up now, and there are 200,000 manufacturing jobs in Ontario where the buildings are now boarded up. If that's called investing in Ontario, it should be called the de-investing in Ontario act, because we're not moving forward in those areas. We have to move forward if we're going to rebuild Ontario.

Adding a slush fund at the end of the year, in my opinion, does not cut it entirely. If you're going to invest in Ontario, people must have jobs. There has to be an incentive for manufacturers and people who pay the big dollars, invest the real dollars in Ontario, and we're not seeing that. Why else would 200,000 manufacturing jobs leave the province? It doesn't seem to bother the Premier, in my opinion. I've heard his comments in question period, and it's like it's not a problem: "Don't worry. Be happy. The jobs will come from somewhere."

With trips like the one we've seen to China, maybe we're going to lose more jobs now. We've got offices set up in China to promote Ontario. Do you really think the Chinese people want a lot of jobs leaving China to go to Ontario? They're going to try to attract Ontario jobs to China. Of course, we've seen in these last few days that it has been a horrible time for the Minister of Economic Development and Trade to leave our province and head over there. I don't think the judgment was very good on that particular deal, and I don't think this is something we can blame on the federal government this time. It wasn't a trade mission.

Now I'm told today, and I don't know if this is true—maybe somebody can correct me in one of the comments at the end—but I understand this trip is worth \$300,000. Can someone correct me on that? Hundreds of thousands of dollars to send Minister Papatello, the Minister of Economic Development and Trade, over to cut a ribbon? I don't know how many other jobs are coming with that when she comes back. Maybe we'll be really lucky and she'll come back in a week or two and report that we've got all these manufacturing jobs coming back to Canada—they're leaving China and coming back here.

I just want to say—and I'm ready to close here—what a pleasure it has been—

**Mr. Lou Rinaldi:** Don't close, Garfield. Don't stop now.

**Mr. Garfield Dunlop:** I know my colleague from—

**Interjection:** Northumberland.

**Mr. Garfield Dunlop:** Yes, from Northumberland. I just know he wants to get up and give a long speech on this and rebut everything I've said. I know you do, because you're so supportive of this legislation. You think it's such powerful legislation that you want to stand up

and say that everything I've said and commented on tonight is wrong. The reality is that he likely won't say anything, because I don't think the government is very proud of this piece of legislation.

At a time when 200,000 jobs have left Ontario, calling a bill Investing in Ontario Act as a short title is really an oxymoron, because we're not investing in Ontario anymore. We've raised taxes; we've added \$29 billion to the provincial debt in five years. I hope communities are happy with this, but the way this bill reads today—as I said earlier, we will make amendments to this bill and hopefully the government will pass them. If there is surplus money at the end of the year, let's promise that the municipalities will actually get this money, if the government is intent on changing it, and not hold it over their heads so that if the association of municipalities puts out a press release and complains about the government in some particular area, they won't get the money that year. We don't want to see that sort of thing happening. We want to make sure that it flows right to the municipalities.

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Finally, I wanted to get around to the fact that as municipalities invest in public law, public safety and public security, we have to take advantage of the \$156 million that the federal government has put on the table. We've seen nothing in the budget for it. That's to add a thousand new police officers in the province of Ontario, 2,500 nationwide. The reality is, we see nothing that would indicate that this government is willing to spend any money on policing this year. All the extra money seems to be going into Caledonia.

I'll close up by thanking you for your patience. I'm looking forward to the comments and questions on my speech. I'm looking forward to the member from Northumberland getting up and giving a barn-burner on why this bill is so great. We keep waiting for it. He's been heckling me and other members all night. Hopefully he'll be here to provide some very positive, constructive criticism on the great comments that I and my caucus members have made here tonight on how bad this bill really is.

I appreciate the time, Madam Speaker; thank you for your indulgence.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath):** Questions and comments?

**Hon. Madeleine Meilleur:** I'd like to speak on Bill 35, Investing in Ontario Act. If passed, this will allow Ontario to use year-end surpluses to help municipalities build and improve their roads. How foreign is that concept for the members of the opposition? This government works with municipalities; they are our partners.

I was listening to the presentation from the representatives of Nepean—Carleton and Carleton—Mississippi Mills criticizing the city of Ottawa administration. It's not new. That's the concept they brought to this Legislature when they were in power. Us, we're different. We're working with municipalities; we're helping them. For instance, we are investing almost \$100 million in the city of Ottawa to help them to repair their roads, and \$20



million was announced by the Minister of Municipal Affairs to build their new archives. We're working with them to help them to repair their roads and for the widening of Highway 17. Last Friday, I announced \$14 million for l'Université d'Ottawa and \$10 million for Carleton University. That's the type of partnership that the city of Ottawa is not used to, but this government will continue to work with them to make sure that the city is better for their residents.

**Ms. Lisa MacLeod:** It's wonderful to comment. My colleague from Simcoe North did a fantastic job, I think, of distilling this piece of legislation for what it really is. Just a comment: The Minister of Community and Social Services commented, and she may want to correct the record, about myself and my colleague from Carleton-Mississippi Mills criticizing the city of Ottawa's administration. We've never done such a thing. The only people we like to criticize are the members opposite for putting such poorly-thought-out legislation. She may or may not want to correct the record; I'm not quite sure. But it is consistent with the way they do business over there.

My colleague made two great points with respect to this piece of legislation, and I think they bear repeating. The first is, when the members opposite decide that municipalities aren't in vogue anymore and they want to instead put this funding elsewhere, they are completely entitled to. We're looking at a bill that's legalizing year-end slush funds. It's essentially a bribe bill too: "We can give you money and then we can withhold it." This is a real problem because again it goes back to the whole sustainability of this piece of legislation. It's like they're dangling it out with a little carrot—

**Hon. Monique M. Smith:** On a point of order, Madam Speaker. I don't believe that referring to anything to do with bribes in this House is parliamentary, and I would ask that the member be asked to withdraw.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath):** Is the member willing to withdraw that statement?

**Ms. Lisa MacLeod:** No, I'm not.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath):** I would ask the member to consider withdrawing the statement, please.

**Ms. Lisa MacLeod:** Madam Speaker, because I have respect for you as the Chair, I'll withdraw that comment. Having said that, I think there's a real credibility issue with that speech.

The other issue we have is, and the member here mentioned it, if they were so willing to uphold this legislation, each member in this House right now from the government side would be standing up and lauding it. Instead, they have ceded almost every single moment tonight to us for debate. That's how ashamed they are of this piece of legislation.

**Mrs. Linda Jeffrey:** I've been listening tonight. It's been a little challenging, but I was listening to what the member from Simcoe North spoke about. Frankly, I think the title of the bill, the Investing in Ontario Act, says it all. I think there are a lot of people in the chamber who

were former municipal councillors who have a visceral knowledge and a feeling about what used to happen when we were on councils. Myself, I was budget chair for probably four cycles in my municipal council, the city of Brampton, and I can tell you, I didn't see a dime from the province. I saw no partnership, no consultation. They didn't want our opinions; they didn't participate in anything we did. It was benign neglect, if I can say it's anything. So it was a very frustrating time. It was hard to do more and more with less and less.

**Ms. Lisa MacLeod:** On a point of order, Madam Speaker: I think it would probably be benign and very unparliamentary language to actually say that a previous administration, regardless of which administration it was in the last 167 years or what have you, would benignly neglect another level of government. I'd ask the member to withdraw.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath):** I thank the member for her comments, but that's not a point of order. I look back to the member from Brampton-Springdale to continue her comments.

**Mrs. Linda Jeffrey:** I can think of one issue that really speaks volumes in my community. I think it was three budgets ago that we announced \$95 million in AccedeRide funding, which is transit for my community. I believe we announced it on a Tuesday; it was in the bank account on a Friday. My government delivered on those dollars, and my community was shocked at its speed. They had never dealt with a government that said something and then delivered it. So I have first-hand experience that we have delivered those funds. It's going to make a difference in my community. I support this legislation.

**Mr. Norman W. Sterling:** I'm really happy the member from Brampton stood up and talked about these cheques, because they were traditionally delivered to municipalities at the end of March every year, and nobody knows how much they're getting. In some cases, I understand, some municipalities this year asked for \$1 million and got \$2 million instead of \$1 million. You know what happens here? Normally, in the past, when governments wrote a cheque, they wrote a cheque for a project that in fact needed that money at that time to be spent on the project. This is money in advance, if you will. In fact, I can cite—I'm not going to cite the name of the municipalities, because they love it. A municipality with about 2,000 people in it got a cheque for \$7 million. It's in the bank. They're earning \$40,000 a month in interest off that investment. They're earning about 4%. Meanwhile, these guys have increased our total debt and are paying 6%. Do you get it? They give to a municipal government that has no intent of spending that money in the next three to four to five years—

**Interjection:** Oh, come on.

**Mr. Norman W. Sterling:** They don't; it's in the bank. And this is happening all over Ontario. They're getting money; they're putting it in the bank; they're collecting a little bit of interest. Meanwhile, you've increased the debt to put out this money and we're paying



more interest—a net loss for the taxpayers of Ontario. This is crazy. This money is not going to real projects; it's going in the banks of the municipalities. Yes, they might spend it in the next year; they might spend it two years from now; they might spend it in five years. But that's not the way government is supposed to work. You're supposed to pay out of here for real projects that are ready to go or have been built.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath):** Response?

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**Mr. Garfield Dunlop:** I'd like to thank the Minister of Community and Social Services and the members from Nepean–Carleton, Brampton–Springdale and Carleton–Mississippi Mills for their comments. It has been a pleasure to speak tonight on this.

I came to Queen's Park in 1999, so I was on both sides of the government. I was in municipal politics besides that. I wanted to point out that one program alone has put \$20 billion to the municipalities in infrastructure programs around the province. That, of course, is the Super-Build program. I don't think there's a municipality or a riding that didn't benefit from that across this—

**Mr. Bill Murdoch:** Maybe Brampton didn't get any.

**Mr. Garfield Dunlop:** Maybe Brampton didn't get any, but most of the other municipalities did. I got millions and millions of dollars out of that in the riding of Simcoe North, both at the municipal level and the federal level. So I don't know where they got it.

What I really want to say is that the reality is—

*Interjections.*

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath):** Order. We're trying to listen to the response of the member for Simcoe North, and I ask for the co-operation of the members, please. Thank you.

**Mr. Garfield Dunlop:** I'm back to the overall spending, and I want to put it on the record again: It took from 1867 to 2003 to get to \$67 billion in spending in Ontario, and in the last five years, we've raised that by \$29 billion, to \$96 billion. That's a 41% increase in spending. How much longer can we sustain that kind of spending? What I'm trying to say is, are we spending the money wisely? That's what I'm worried about. I'm worried about my children and my grandchildren. I'm worried they're not going to be able to afford to live in this province. Because you can't go on forever increasing spending at 8% a year when inflation is at 2%. It's as plain and simple as that.

I appreciate the opportunity tonight, and I look forward to some of my other colleagues to carry forward as well.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath):** Further debate?

**Ms. Sylvia Jones:** I'm very pleased to have the opportunity to bring this important issue to the floor of the Legislature for debate this evening, on the Investing in Ontario Act. Clearly, any legislation titled Investing in Ontario Act will be of interest to our government funding partners. So let's go back to the March 12 announcement

press conference where the Minister of Finance announced the intention of Bill 35.

The proposed bill, called the Investing in Ontario Act, would direct a portion of provincial surpluses to municipalities for infrastructure needs, such as improving roads and bridges, expanding transit and upgrading social housing.

I suppose in press conferences and news conferences you can say whatever you want, but let's go back to the bill. While any announcement of potentially receiving money is greatly appreciated by our municipal partners, the Investing in Ontario Act is yet another example of the McGuinty government's missed opportunity to capitalize and plan on long-term initiatives that will benefit the hardworking taxpaying constituents of this wonderful province.

Far too often, politicians and constituents alike hear from municipal councils threatening to shut down programs, or are unable to repair their roads and bridges. We hear the threats of municipally administered public transportation entities threatening to cut services and raising fares. Year after year, residents of municipalities all throughout the province ask questions like, "Why are the valuable community services being suspended or possibly terminated?" The reason is, because this Liberal government has failed municipalities when it comes to providing long-term funding.

The Investing in Ontario Act makes reference to eligible recipients, not municipalities. And while municipalities would qualify as eligible recipients, why is it that they are not explicitly mentioned in the legislation? Even if you were to make the argument that the government intended to include municipalities as eligible recipients, why does the legislation fail to even list entities that are considered eligible recipients and the entities that are not eligible recipients?

As a proud member of the Progressive Conservative caucus, I obviously was not at the cabinet meetings and conversations from which this bill developed, but if it was this government's intent to truly invest in Ontario, to leave a legacy for the years to come, I find it hard to believe that they would fail to specify and identify municipalities as eligible recipients and plan for this investment. Given that municipalities and the responsibilities that they have are inherently at the heart of Ontario communities, it's either that this government went through as much trouble as it could to exclude specifically listing municipalities as eligible recipients, or quite simply, they purposely forgot to specify our municipal partners. Even if municipalities were to be considered eligible, the bill does not stipulate how the money should be spent or even the basis on which the payments will be calculated. Rather than predetermining these details, the McGuinty Liberals have decided that these particulars will be left up to the cabinet.

These important aspects of funding are not being dealt with in the proper fashion, because only when municipalities can be guaranteed the stable funding they need are they able to prepare and allocate their resources.



Without certainty of funding, they are unable to proceed with the careful, prudent planning our municipalities want and are expected to do. This act will not change the fact that municipalities will be annually begging the province for money. While it does have the potential to provide the municipalities with extra cash, it doesn't make any guarantee that the money will actually come.

In mid-March, the Toronto Star went on record as saying, "In each of the following two fiscal years, Duncan has predicted end-of-year surpluses of \$900 million. While that figure would leave municipalities with \$300 million a year, the slightest error in Duncan's revenue projections—one tenth of 1%—would leave them without any extra infrastructure funds at all.

"This suggests municipalities cannot count on much surplus money from Queen's Park, especially as the economy weakens."

The Globe and Mail echoes the concerns voiced by the Star, saying that "municipalities across Ontario can count on a little extra money from the province to fix potholes, aging sewer pipes and other costly infrastructure, but only if the economy stays strong."

The government claims to have found evidence in the recent RBC report to defend the economic troubles that Ontario is facing. However, the report reads that Ontario will "teeter on the brink of recession through 2008, but it should pick up in 2009 to coincide with a recovering US economy." The very fact that RBC used the word "recession" signals that troubles are ahead. At the very least it means that the unanticipated surpluses upon which the payments referred to in Bill 35 are based could be significantly smaller than expected. I'm going to make a guess and say we won't be seeing any surpluses.

On December 9, 2003—this actually ties back to one of the pieces of legislation that Bill 35 is going to amend—the McGuinty government, through the Ministry of Finance, issued a press release concerning legislation that would "expand public sector accountability," again, a great name for a bill. To quote from the press release—you can say whatever you want in a press release: "In keeping with the McGuinty government's commitment to deliver positive change, Finance Minister Greg Sorbara today introduced amendments to the Audit Act to make the entire public sector more transparent and accountable to the people of Ontario."

It appears that the McGuinty government likes to talk about honesty and accountability. However, its own actions not even five years later through the Investing in Ontario Act tell a completely contradictory story. Bill 35, the Investing in Ontario Act, provides immense discretion to cabinet, to the point that it's hard to believe it was the same government that advocated accountability when it was first elected. For example, the act authorizes the Minister of Finance to make payments to eligible recipients, defined as any person or entity—no individual but a partnership of individuals—that does not carry on activities for gain or profit. No "municipal" word in there; no "infrastructure" word in there.

I'm not sure how authorizing one person to make payments to any person or entity without any specification about how the money should be spent or any stipulation about the basis on which payments will be calculated equates to the accountability they referenced in their 2003 bill. Rather, Bill 35 is an example of how suspect the current government's actions have become. While the McGuinty government trumpets the need for government to be accountable in one breath, it legitimizes unaccountable practices in another. It seems to be a classic case of "Do as I say and not as I do."

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As I said earlier in my two-minute hit, I have spoken to many municipal mayors and councillors since this infamous March 12 announcement was made by the Minister of Finance, and they understand that this is an announcement with very little depth behind it. When all economic forecasts are talking about an economy that is going south, as opposed to increasing, they know that the likelihood of actually receiving any kind of year-end surplus, and therefore of having the ability to plan for some infrastructure projects that are desperately needed in their municipalities, is basically non-existent.

As I said before and would like to reiterate in closing, this bill legalizes end-of-year spending condemned by your Auditor General. You got caught, and Bill 35 is your way out of it. The other reason we're talking about and debating Bill 35 tonight is that the Liberals want to remove a Progressive Conservative bill that mandated that all surpluses, regardless of size, must go to pay down the provincial debt, which, as we all know, is currently sitting at \$162 billion.

It's unfortunate that we have come to the point in this debate where the Liberals have chosen not to participate in a bill that so fundamentally changes how the government can distribute funds and hold this hammer over their funding partners, like municipalities, but not exclusively, and say, "Do as we say, and you may get the opportunity to get some surplus, if and when we get it in the future." I think it's a terrible precedent for the government to set, and for obvious reasons I laid out earlier, I will obviously not be supporting this bill.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath):** Questions and comments?

**Mr. Wayne Arthurs:** I appreciate the comments by the member from Dufferin—Caledon. I wish her longevity in her seat in Dufferin—Caledon, much more so than her predecessor, who, if he had stayed there, might even have been in this place. But having said that, he's not, and that's a good thing. I just want to comment in respect to her comments on the bill.

The intent of Bill 35 is quite clear. The municipalities understand clearly what this government is about, and we've established a long history over the past four and a half years in supporting municipalities in a variety of ways, everything from the gas tax initiative to the uploading of public health and land ambulance to working on ODSP and OW. There's a myriad of initiatives that the government and municipalities have engaged in over



the past four and a half years, and it's for those very reasons that the municipalities can feel extremely confident that, subject to the fiscal house of the province being in the position to share monies from a surplus with them, then monies will flow to them.

One only needs to look back just a very few short months ago, with the MIII program, to see where municipalities throughout the province are benefiting from the capacity of the province to support many of them in their infrastructure needs. The history over the past four and a half years is quite clear: This is a government that works closely with its municipal partners, that shares with those municipal partners, that uploads ongoing and regular costs—that stable funding that's necessary for particular programs—but also, when it has the opportunity, when the fiscal house allows for it, when there is a surplus situation, the municipalities should share in that opportunity and be able to continue to work on the rebuilding of the infrastructure of this province that is so desperately needed.

I look forward to the continuing debate on Bill 35 and, should the House see fit, its adoption and subsequent funding for municipalities.

**Mr. Norman W. Sterling:** Our new member, Ms. Jones, from Dufferin–Caledon, has caught on very, very quickly, not only to this Legislature but also to what a sham Bill 35 is.

I get a real charge out of members from the government backbench talking about the fact that they're distributing this surplus to the municipalities. They're not distributing any surplus at all; they're distributing borrowed money. They borrowed \$5.5 billion more this year than they borrowed the year before. That's the money that they're throwing out to the municipalities as some big surplus that they have. They don't have a surplus at all. It's only because of the accounting system that they're showing a positive budget. If the accounting system was like it was back when Mike Harris was in government, they would be operating with a \$5-billion deficit.

**Mr. Michael A. Brown:** What did he do?

**Mr. Norman W. Sterling:** No he didn't; we had a balanced budget. Bob Rae, your Liberal friend at the federal level, left us with—

*Interjections.*

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath):** Order. Can we please hear the member?

**Mr. Michael A. Brown:** Why?

**Mr. Norman W. Sterling:** I think Mr. Brown asked the real question, "Why?"

"Because we're not listening anyway. We don't listen to debate; we make up our minds before we get here." Don't listen to the real numbers in your budget, don't listen to rationale; let's just carry on this sham with regard to saddling our grandkids and our kids with a huge mortgage that has increased by \$5.5 billion this year.

**Hon. Monique M. Smith:** I'm pleased to be able to comment again on this legislation that we're debating this evening. I did want to respond to the member for Carleton–Mississippi Mills, who seems to have a very

short memory when it comes to budgets and his government's ability to manage the economy of the province, leaving us with \$5.6-billion deficit in their last year in office, leaving us with an incredible infrastructure deficit that all of my municipal leaders have been talking to me about since I was first elected.

**Hon. Christopher Bentley:** The streets are paved with gold.

**Hon. Monique M. Smith:** The streets are almost paved with gold. We are at least paving streets, which is more than we can say for the previous administration.

I'd like to quote, for the member from Simcoe North, from the North Bay Nugget of Friday, April 4, where our mayor, Mayor Vic Fedeli, who is not always a fan of this government, noted:

"The city is reaping the economic spinoffs of its hospital project with development in the area picking up as construction continues.

"We're going to be seeing a lot of construction," said Mayor Vic Fedeli, noting work is also expected to begin this spring on the One Kid's Place children's treatment centre.

"In addition, Fedeli said the city expects to award a contract later this month for the construction of a roundabout at the Gormanville Road and College Drive intersection."

That's just one of the many streets that are being looked after through the investments of our provincial government, through our most recent budget.

In Nipissing, we saw over \$8.5 million being invested through the municipal infrastructure investment initiative for projects in eight of my communities. I'm very proud to talk to you about the investment of \$2 million on Powassan Memorial Park Drive East. We'll be in Powassan in a couple of weeks for the maple syrup festival, and I know the people of Powassan are delighted to see that infrastructure investment being made.

We have Deerland Road in East Ferris, we have Memorial Drive in Chisolm, we have a new all-season sports facility in Callander, and we have the reconstruction of Oak Street in downtown North Bay being completed. These are just a few of our infrastructure investments that our municipalities are appreciating, and they're enjoying a much more beneficial relationship with the province of Ontario.

**Mrs. Christine Elliott:** I certainly agree with the comments that were made a little earlier by my colleague the member for Carleton–Mississippi Mills when he commented on the excellent work that's being done by our new member for Dufferin–Caledon. She's only been here in this place for a very short period of time, but she's already got the number of those members over there. She understands that with the McGuinty Liberals, what you see is rarely what you get. Because here we have a bill—and the honourable member from Dufferin–Caledon commented on this—that purports to give money to municipalities at the end of each fiscal year if there's a certain level of surplus, but again, it doesn't say



that in the legislation; there's just a hope that that's going to happen.

**Ms. Lisa MacLeod:** It's a hope and a dream.

**Mrs. Christine Elliott:** A hope and a dream, exactly.

As the member for Simcoe North commented on earlier, if this government is truly serious about wanting to grant extra money, surplus funds, to municipalities at the end of each fiscal year, why don't they accept an amendment that puts that in the legislation? Why not do that if you want to be open and transparent? But, then again, that's not the case. You don't want to do that, because you want to have the ability to move it around the way you want to do it at the end of each year, hold the carrot and the stick in front of the municipalities.

You're not treating them with respect, you're not treating them as true partners; you're treating them in a manner that's going to try and force them into your way of thinking or, if not, "You don't get the money at the end of the year." That's not the way to treat municipal partners. You can't deal with a partner in that kind of a power struggle.

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What you need to be doing is treating them with respect, giving them the level of secure, stable funding that they need from year to year so that they can plan. They can't plan in a vacuum. There are different projects that need to be done every year. You need to give them that level of funding, as the member for Dufferin-Caledon has quite rightly pointed out, in order to allow them to keep up the infrastructure that we need to be able to carry on business in the province of Ontario. But then again, that's another one of the issues that seem to be lost on this government.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath):** The member for Dufferin-Caledon for a response.

**Ms. Sylvia Jones:** I would like to acknowledge the responses from Pickering-Scarborough East, Carleton-Mississippi Mills, the Minister of Revenue and the member for Whitby-Oshawa.

I'd like to wrap up my comments this evening specifically on Bill 35, to talk a little about what we should be doing for our municipal partners, because I think the press releases and the conferences say one thing and the bill says another.

The first thing that this government should do is stop pre-empting the municipal fiscal service review being done at AMO. You've brought forward the experts, and yet the Liberals are announcing Bill 35 to try and buy off the municipalities. The problem is, the municipalities are on to you. They've figured out that it is another one of your empty promises because the only way the 462 municipalities across Ontario are going to see a dime is if there is a surplus. Then and only then can you even hope to get some municipal infrastructure money for the deficit that every municipality across Ontario is dealing with.

As I've pointed out earlier in my speech, the words "municipality" and "infrastructure" are nowhere to be found in this act. It is strictly up to the discretion of cabinet. If the Liberals would like to actually bring for-

ward some positive amendments that would encourage the opposition to consider this bill, I would strongly urge you to add the words "municipal" and "infrastructure" in who is actually eligible for the surplus money. And then we can have a substantive debate about what's in the bill.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath):** Further debate?

**Mr. Bill Murdoch:** To finish the debate off tonight, we've got to get some things straight. The member from Brampton mentioned that they got no money when the Conservatives were in government. I don't know what happened to Brampton and why they didn't get any, but she said that right in this House. I would like her to come back and prove that they got no money for those eight years. I don't think she can prove that. I was here. Governments got money; there was no doubt. Maybe not exactly what they wanted, maybe not as much as the slush fund gives now, but there was money going to municipalities.

I would hope that the member from Brampton may even want to correct her statement in this House, because she said they got no money. She was in charge of the money in her town, so maybe there was something there; I don't know. Maybe she couldn't figure out how to get money from the province. Who knows? But I'll leave it up to her if she'd like to figure that out.

Another thing we have to get straightened out in this House—the Liberals can't seem to figure it out—is that when the Conservatives took over after the NDP were here, there was about a \$10-billion deficit. I'm not sure what it was. The promise then was to balance our budget within four years. Back in those days, promises used to be kept in the House. It's a little different nowadays, but back in those days, promises were kept in this House. The promise was that we would balance it in four years, which was done in four years, and then we had four years of balanced budgets. We had a little bit of trouble in that fifth year, as you would point out, but we have to look at that fifth year. In that fifth year, there was an election halfway through the year. And definitely, yes, there was a \$5-billion-or-whatever deficit in that budget. But we didn't get a chance to finish out that year. You won. Then you expanded on that, and never tried to balance it.

So if you really want to say whose fault that was—you guys wanted it. You got in with all kinds of promises, tons of promises that you were going to do, and didn't live up to all of those promises. Mind you, you got accepted in the next one, so that's fine. People like to try to believe you, especially when you're dumping out all this money in this slush fund.

You're going to legalize this by passing this bill, but all the money that you gave out at the end of this year—are you saying that wasn't legal? You're trying to make it legal now to do that, but I know that a lot of municipalities got a lot of money at the end of this year, which was fine; we're not complaining, except for the way you did it. Again, the Liberal philosophy: Screw it up if you can. If it's a good deal, screw it up, because we wouldn't want anybody else to have a good story.



In my riding, we were happy to get some money, but it took us six days; the ridings that had Liberal members knew six days before the ridings that had Conservative and NDP members. That's the way you guys did that. That's exactly the way you did it. So how do you expect us to trust you on a bill like this, where it's going to allow you to give out money any way you want?

*Interjection.*

**Mr. Bill Murdoch:** You have nothing in this bill—I would think, Madam Speaker, that the minister from London would maybe want to sit in his own seat, at least, to heckle. He thinks he's some new-found member here that he can get up and point his skinny little finger at us any day he wants to, yet he sits in somebody else's seat to heckle. Maybe he would like to sit in his seat to heckle, because I would like to have him sitting in his own seat.

We won't say what minister it is. All we know is that he's out of London, which is receiving all of Toronto's garbage, and they don't want the trucks to go too fast. They're going to put regulators on them so they can't get that garbage from Toronto to London too fast. But those four members from London—not one of them stood up for London. They just said, "Toronto, bring your garbage down to us." And then they stand up here say that they got all these jobs out of it. One of the members from London was bragging the other day about all the jobs they've got in London. I guess it's working at the new dump they've got in London. I know Toronto just loves you for that.

Anyway, he's stopped heckling now, so I guess we'll have to get back on to Bill 35.

This is a bill that will allow the Liberals to legally give money to their friends. That's what the bill should be called, because it doesn't say anything about municipalities. It doesn't say that's where it's going to go. I'm sure that member from Brampton, three years from now, will be saying, "We didn't get any money. What happened? I didn't have a rowing club or a cricket club in my riding; I guess I didn't get the money." But there's nothing in this bill. You should be demanding that that be in the bill if that's what you want to say, if it's going to municipalities. You people should be demanding that: "No, we'll just let it go because we have to sit here and do what we're told." Clap like seals and do what you're told—we've heard that before. But anyway, that's what's happening here.

**Mrs. Linda Jeffrey:** It's what they used to try to get you to do, Bill.

**Mr. Bill Murdoch:** It's nice to hear that the member's in her seat at least, so we'll let her heckle from her seat. At least she's sitting in her seat, so that's fine. I don't mind a little heckling because it gets the night over, Madam Speaker, and as you know, it's getting close here. We have a couple more minutes to go on this and talk about the slush bill—the bill that has no credibility to it.

We have a debt. And what was it? It was about \$40 billion when they took over and now it's \$90 billion. Is that right? It couldn't be \$50 billion that they blew in

four years; it must be a little less than that. How much is it, Garfield? You can tell me. You had the figure there.

**Mr. Garfield Dunlop:** It's okay—

**Mr. Bill Murdoch:** It's okay? Fifty billion will do?

**Mr. Garfield Dunlop:** Say whatever you want to, Bill.

**Mr. Bill Murdoch:** Yes, you can say whatever you want to at this point. I'm sure they say whatever they want over there: "We didn't get any money." But you've raised it so high that \$600 million is not even going to go far toward paying it off, but at least you're going to put that much towards it if you have a surplus. We don't even know what kind of surplus you're expecting to have, and then if there's any left over, "Legally now, we can go out and give it to whoever we want. It doesn't matter who you are, just make sure you vote for us and you'll get the money. Just sign on the dotted line here." This Liberal government is going to send it out, and they'll be able to say, "It's all legal. You guys can't complain about us having a slush fund anymore because we're making it legal and we can give it to whoever we want to give it to."

This is the problem with this bill. You keep bragging about how you're going to give it to municipalities, but it doesn't say that. If you'd put that in there as an amendment, then over here we may even like it a little better. But you won't even do that as an amendment, because they won't let you think for yourselves. You're here, you do what you're told, you sit in here tonight until 9:30. Then, tomorrow, the same old thing: "Do what you're told, don't vote against our government"—the rules come down from the Premier's office.

This was a government that was going to be different. We were going to have different rules, and they were going to listen to everybody. But unfortunately, it didn't happen, and you can easily see that from this bill, because only the mandarins up in the Premier's office would come up with something like this. Who else would come up with a bill to legalize a slush fund? The Liberals in Ottawa weren't even that corrupt. They did it behind the scenes up there.

*Interjection.*

**Mr. Bill Murdoch:** The Liberals in Ottawa were corrupt. Look what they did.

**Mrs. Linda Jeffrey:** No.

**Mr. Bill Murdoch:** They were, I'm sorry. This bill is going to legalize it. It's going to be legal to do it. You're going to be able to hand it out to all of your buddies. That's what this bill is going to do. You can tell me it's different, but I can't see where it says in the bill that it's different. That's the problem: You didn't put that into the bill to allow us to do that. If you had done that, as I said, maybe over here we might have liked it.

There's no guarantee the north is going to get anything. I know the minister of the north is here. He's probably thinking, "Boy, is any of this money going to come up north?" I know that some of that slush fund did at the end, but you've got no guarantee that next time you'll get a cent of it. You'd better look for some clubs up there,

some good cricket clubs that'll get some money for you so you can get some money to help the roads up there, because you know you need it. Unfortunately, this bill guarantees no one anything.

I believe, Madam Speaker, it's 9:30 of the clock. You may want to adjourn, or we can go on. It's at your peril.

*Second reading debate deemed adjourned.*

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath):** Assuming that the member has completed his remarks, it is certainly 9:30 of the clock. This House will stand adjourned until tomorrow at 1:30 p.m.

*The House adjourned at 2131.*



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of Ontario

First Session, 39<sup>th</sup> Parliament

Assemblée législative  
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# Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

# Journal des débats (Hansard)

Tuesday 15 April 2008

Mardi 15 avril 2008

Speaker  
Honourable Steve Peters

Clerk  
Deborah Deller

Président  
L'honorable Steve Peters

Greffière  
Deborah Deller



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# LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 15 April 2008

# ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 15 avril 2008

*The House met at 1330.  
Prayers.*

## MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

### GYPSY MOTH INFESTATION

**Mr. Tim Hudak:** Time is running desperately short for the Ministry of Natural Resources to come to the table and help affected municipalities and property owners fund a gypsy moth spraying program for 2008.

As you may know, gypsy moth caterpillars are particularly dangerous pests because they are known to attack more than 300 different plant species. In 2006, about 12,000 acres in the Niagara and Hamilton area were defoliated by gypsy moths, according to the Ministry of Natural Resources' own statistics. That area, sadly, more than doubled to 31,000 acres in 2007. Arborists who have studied these affected areas expect the infestation to grow even more in 2008 unless decisive action is taken now. Spraying must be done in early spring in order to be truly effective.

I applaud the efforts of municipal leaders in Hamilton, West Lincoln, Pelham and other areas for their initiative in working to create their own cost-shared spraying programs. However, the cost of fighting this infestation cannot be put squarely on the backs of small municipalities and the affected property owners alone. Glanbrook residents like Dan and Barb Arbuckle and Anne Dunham, and West Lincoln residents like Scotty Bakalar, cannot fight this infestation on their own.

The ministry had previously funded a joint spraying program. If the minister wants to protect southern Ontario's natural resources, she must help support a funding program today.

### ADEENA NIAZI

**Ms. Helena Jaczek:** It is my honour and privilege to introduce one of Ontario's most distinguished citizens and resident of my riding of Oak Ridges–Markham, Adeena Niazi. Ms. Niazi was awarded Ontario's highest honour, the Order of Ontario, in January of this year. This is the most recent in a long line of prestigious and much-deserved awards and decorations, including the Persons Award by LEAF, the Legal Education Action Fund; the Vincent Kelly Award of the Centre for Refugee Studies of York University; and the YWCA's Women of

Distinction Award 2004 for global action for women's rights.

The cornerstone of Ms. Niazi's career has been the creation of the Afghan Women's Organization, which has helped countless girls and women both in Ontario and in Ms. Niazi's native Afghanistan to become empowered citizens of our global community. Ms. Niazi also had the extraordinary opportunity of developing initiatives in Taliban-ruled Afghanistan and was elected to the Loya Jirga, which was the council charged with the responsibility of designing a new Afghan government after the fall of the Taliban, and led to the government of Hamid Karzai.

My time here is far too brief to share with you all of Ms. Niazi's outstanding contributions to our province. However, I am pleased and proud to announce that Ms. Niazi is with us today, and I would like to take this opportunity to introduce her to this House.

### BOB PRINGLE

**Mr. Bill Murdoch:** I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate Chatsworth dairy farmer, former Grey county warden and my good friend, Bob Pringle, on winning the 2008 Tommy Cooper Award.

Bob received this award at a dinner in Elmwood on Friday, April 4, after being nominated by the Grey County Women's Institute and the Grey County Dairy Producers committee. It is quite an honour to receive this award, as it recognizes an individual's outstanding contribution to farming and rural life.

The award honours the late Tommy Cooper, a provincial government agriculture rep for Grey. It has been presented since 1959, in recognition of contributions made to the betterment of agriculture and rural living. Tommy Cooper helped found the Grey-Bruce Livestock Co-operative and is credited with helping local farmers adapt to new scientific and mechanical innovations.

Bob is a staunch supporter of supply management and a strong advocate for a better deal for area municipalities around provincial funding for the farm tax rebate. In his words, "All of Ontario should be paying for the benefit of having good, safe food, and that would mean that the higher populated areas would help." I agree with Bob, and I think we need more people like Bob who are hard-working, honest and passionate about the land.

Congratulations again to Bob on his well-deserved award, and congratulations to the seven nominees, including Brian Wiley of Meaford, Wilma Jeffray of



Wroxeter, Christopher Hilts of Annan, Bob Brassington of Markdale, Wayne Caughill of Conn, Murray Emke of Elmwood and Robert Emerson of Ripley. All of you are excellent role models for our future farmers of Ontario.

### LAW WEEK

**Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn:** I'd like to draw to the attention of members present that this is Law Week across Ontario. On Law Day, which will be take place on April 17, the Ontario Bar Association organizes events and activities across the province that celebrate the rights and freedoms Canadians enjoy. Hundreds of volunteer lawyers in communities across Ontario will give of their time to ensure the success of the many programs and activities that occur through this important week. During Law Week, lawyers, judges and thousands of students across Ontario participate in activities, including court-house tours, elementary and secondary school mock trials, career panels, poster and photo contests, and charity events.

This year's theme is justice, reflecting the right of every Canadian to have equal access to information about the law and legal institutions in Canada. I'm pleased to tell this House today that the chair for Law Day, 2008, is Oakville lawyer Virginia MacLean.

As Ontarians, we're privileged. We live in a province that respects the rule of law, where the law applies to everyone and everyone is equal under the law, where we understand that our justice system is a cornerstone of our society. Many around the world are not as fortunate as we are.

I offer my encouragement and support to the Ontario Bar Association as they carry this important message forward. Please join me in extending best wishes to all those involved for a very successful Law Day, 2008.

### SCHOOL POOLS

**Mrs. Joyce Savoline:** I rise in the House today to remind the Minister of Education that when she was a trustee with the Toronto District School Board, it was very important to her that school programs remain open. Minister Wynne, as school board trustee, stated that she "hoped the board and the community would continue to work together to persuade the provincial government to provide funding for swimming pools in schools." I wonder what has changed for the minister between her time as a board trustee, and now, in her role as Minister of Education.

The McGuinty government is displaying a shocking degree of double speak on this particular policy. In 2006, and again in 2007, this government gave \$900,000 from the Ministry of Education and over \$100,000 from the Ministry of Health Promotion for a Swim to Survive program in the very pools they now want to close. This is yet another example of a government with no concept of how to create and follow a plan.

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The minister said, "It is so important that every child learns how to survive in the water. By partnering with the Lifesaving Society, we're helping ensure children stay healthy and safe."

I can't imagine how confused their stakeholders, community groups and boards of education across this province must be with all this doublespeak. The truth is, this government simply doesn't care, and expects all of us to look the other way when they double back on their promises.

### SCHOOL POOLS

**Mr. Peter Tabuns:** Last night, I attended a meeting in my riding held at Riverdale Collegiate. Students were there and parents were there, and they were angry that school pools are facing closure; angry that pools built with the contributions of citizens over decades were going to be wasted; angry that prize-winning athletes were going to lose their training facilities; angry that this government, which talks about health promotion, fighting obesity and protecting our children's health, is going to let these pools close; angry that young people are not going to be taught the fundamental skills needed to survive safely in the water.

They have a simple request: that the Premier meet with the mayor of Toronto and with the chair of the Toronto District School Board and that everyone, including the Premier, bring money to the table so that the problem is dealt with once and for all.

Today, many of those students and parents are with us here in this chamber. I urge this government to listen to their simple request to take action for the protection and promotion of the health of our young people and to hold onto these extraordinarily valuable pools.

### DAVE WILLIAMS

**Ms. Sophia Aggelonitis:** I'm excited to share with this House that on Monday, along with Dr. Peter George, Dr. Kevin Smith, Dr. John Kelton, Dr. Orovan And Dr. Anvari, we welcomed Dave Williams, a physician and astronaut who has logged a Canadian record of almost 18 hours performing spacewalks. He has landed in the city of Hamilton as a physician scientist for McMaster University and St. Joseph's Healthcare.

Dr. Williams trained and worked as an emergency physician in Toronto and Kitchener before joining the Canadian Space Agency in 1992 to become an astronaut. He has taken part on two NASA space shuttle flights, in 1998 and 2007, as a mission specialist. During the most recent one, he took part in a record three spacewalks, working on construction on the International Space Station. He also trained as an aquanaut, participating in two NASA missions to the world's only underwater research laboratory, Aquarius, in the Florida Keys.

Dr. Williams has an extraordinary career and has been a great ambassador for Canada and for medical sciences,

both on and off the planet. The recruitment of Dr. Williams, an internationally recognized physician and scientist, illustrates the leadership role that we in Hamilton and Ontario have cultivated in the development of state-of-the-art medical robotics research and technologies. We are immensely proud to welcome Dr. Williams to Hamilton.

### CORNWALL COMMUNITY HOSPITAL

**Mr. Jim Brownell:** On April 2, I told the House about the commitment of the constituents of my riding of Stormont-Dundas-South Glengarry towards improvements to Cornwall Community Hospital. This dedication has been manifested through their hard work and generous donations through fundraising and the Corus Caring Hearts Radiothon, which happened last Wednesday. The event took in over \$120,000 in support of their hometown hospital.

To my great pleasure, the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care and my good friend Minister George Smitherman also renewed their commitment to health care in my riding and to the province by announcing on air, during the radiothon, the letter of tender which will allow Cornwall Community Hospital to proceed with their main redevelopment project. With this announcement, this government has once again displayed its dedication to the health care renaissance in my riding and across the province. To date, we have had three redevelopment programs and projects in my riding alone, including Cornwall Community Hospital, approved and moving through major capital redevelopment.

This news only solidifies the fact that the McGuinty government cares about the health and well-being of all its citizens.

Thank you to the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care and to my riding's three Corus radio stations for their tireless efforts in support of health care. Most of all, I would like to thank our citizens of my riding who have opened their hearts and their wallets to help ensure good health care to our community. To all, well done.

### HEALTH CARE

**Mr. Bill Mauro:** I'm pleased to speak about the investments our government is continuing to make in health care in Thunder Bay-Atikokan. We are expanding access to primary care by creating the Atikokan Fort William Clinic and the Dilico Family Health Team and working diligently to lower wait times.

Yesterday we announced \$5.4 million in new hospital funding for my riding of Thunder Bay-Atikokan. We are improving long-term care for our seniors. There will be a new long-term-care home accommodating 336 new beds and 132 new supportive housing units, creating 110 new jobs.

The Thunder Bay Regional Health Sciences Centre is now providing angioplasty services for residents in north-western Ontario, a personal commitment of mine in the

2003 election. This critical service ensures close-to-home treatment for up to 500 people, allowing families to remain together, eliminating family expenses for travel and creating approximately 40 jobs in the process.

I must highlight our government's commitment to ensure PSA testing in Ontario. I introduced two private member's bills to have PSA testing covered through OHIP, and I would like to thank everyone for including this policy in our election platform and for announcing it in our budget, indicating we'll begin funding this procedure in January 2009.

Many people helped to make this happen and some are as follows: Cliff Huber, Bill Vantour, Ron Speck, the Atikokan support group, Steve Dychko, the Thunder Bay area support group, Greg Sarney, the Prostate Cancer Research Foundation of Canada and Thunder Bay seniors.

I'd also like to recognize all of my colleagues in this Assembly for supporting this push to make this test insurable for Ontarians.

## REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

### STANDING COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL POLICY

**M. Shafiq Qaadri:** Je demande la permission de déposer un rapport du comité permanent de la politique sociale et je propose son adoption.

I beg leave to present a report from the standing committee on social policy and move its adoption, and send it to you by way of page Bethany.

**The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Lisa Freedman):** Your committee begs to report the following bill as amended:

Bill 8, An Act to Amend the Education Act / Projet de loi 8, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'éducation.

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Shall the report be received and adopted? Agreed? Agreed.

*Report adopted.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** The bill is therefore ordered for third reading.

## INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

### APOLOGY ACT, 2008

#### LOI DE 2008 SUR

#### LA PRÉSENTATION D'EXCUSES

Mr. Oraziotti moved first reading of the following bill:  
Bill 59, An Act respecting apologies / Projet de loi 59, Loi concernant la présentation d'excuses.

**Mr. David Oraziotti:** I beg leave to introduce a bill entitled the Apology Act.

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.



*First reading agreed to.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** The member for a short statement?

**Mr. David Oraziotti:** The bill provides an apology made to or on behalf of a person in relation to any civil matter and does not constitute an admission of fault or liability by the person or an acknowledgement of liability in respect of a claim in relation to the matter, and does not affect the insurance coverage available to the person making the apology, and is not admissible in any civil proceeding.

Similar legislation has been passed in three Canadian provinces and 35 US states. The initiative is important as it would allow people to communicate compassion—

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Thank you.

## MOTIONS

### PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

**Hon. Michael Bryant:** I seek unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding private members' public business.

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Agreed? Agreed.

**Hon. Michael Bryant:** I move that, notwithstanding standing order 96(d), the following change be made to the ballot list of private members' public business:

That Mr. Colle and Mr. Sorbara exchange places in order of precedence such that Mr. Colle assumes ballot item 16 and Mr. Sorbara assumes ballot item 75; that Mrs. Sandals and Mr. Arthurs exchange places in order of precedence such that Mrs. Sandals assumes ballot item 24 and Mr. Arthurs assumes ballot item 72; and that, notwithstanding standing order 96(g), the requirement for notice be waived with respect to ballot items 15 and 16.

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

*Agreed to.*

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## STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

### ENVIRONMENT INDUSTRY

**Hon. John Gerretsen:** Today is Environment Industry Day at Queen's Park, and I would encourage all members to attend this event later on this afternoon in committee rooms 1 and 2 and meet some of the men and women who are making Ontario's environmental sector such a growth industry and who are so instrumental to its success.

Ontario's environment industry now contributes almost \$8 billion a year to our economy. Our province is nearing the \$1-billion mark in environmental exports, a

market that can only grow and gain in importance. Our province is now responsible for almost half of Canada's environment industry revenue. Approximately 60,000 highly skilled and dedicated professionals are working here in Ontario to help shape the green economy of the future.

I would like to acknowledge and applaud those dynamic business leaders who are here today, and I see them in various places in the gallery. Why don't we give them a round of applause?

*Applause.*

**Hon. John Gerretsen:** It is this dedicated group of experts, their associates and companies that they have built that are helping us create the green economy we need to ensure Ontario's future health and prosperity.

Addressing the challenges associated with climate change and our finite resources is this government's top environmental priority. At the same time, the demand for products and solutions that create sustainability is growing rapidly here in Ontario and in the world at large.

We know that Ontario's environment industry has the potential to be a world leader, and we're contributing the essential funding and investment to make that possible. Premier McGuinty recently announced the creation of Ontario's Next Generation of Jobs Fund. This fund provides \$1.15 billion for companies, institutions and individuals to encourage the innovation and invention process for green technologies.

Our environment sector deserves our full attention, and our encouragement must be a wise combination of financial as well as legislative support. We're not waiting for somebody else to come up with the next generation of low-energy light bulbs, better solar panels or better water treatment. We simply want that to happen right here in Ontario.

A culture and an economy of innovation, with sustainability as its goal, is the key to Ontario's future. The Ontario Environment Industry Association is helping us build a greener, healthier, more prosperous future. It is the kind of future we all want to see—and we want to see it here in our own province, most of all—for our communities, our children, and our children's children.

Again, I encourage all members to take the time to meet with the many members of the Ontario Environment Industry Association on this special occasion later on this afternoon.

### RESEARCH AND INNOVATION

**Hon. John Wilkinson:** I'm very proud to rise in the House today to speak about our government's commitment to make innovation a driving force in Ontario's economy. Specifically, I'd like to speak about Ontario's commitment to creating the next generation of high-value jobs in advanced pharmaceutical manufacturing.

Innovation and ingenuity are not new to Ontario. They are embedded in this province's shared conscience and in our DNA. That's why we've made innovation a key part of our five-point economic plan: to ensure that our

province and our people are equipped to continually reinvent ourselves to a new level of prosperity.

Ontario has all the key ingredients to make this happen. We have world-class researchers, savvy entrepreneurs, an exceptionally skilled workforce and some of the best research institutions in the world. And now, through our \$1.15-billion Next Generation of Jobs Fund, we're taking a bold, focused approach.

We are working at the speed of business. Companies that submit eligible proposals to our ministry will receive an answer within 45 days.

We are the only jurisdiction taking this kind of aggressive action focused on sectors where Ontario punches well above our weight in research, industry and innovation, where we already are or can become global leaders.

One of those areas is Ontario's biopharmaceutical sector. It is among Ontario's most research-intensive industries, investing more than \$550 million in Ontario in 2006 to enable the discovery of innovative new treatments and therapies.

A significant portion of this investment goes to Ontario's universities, hospitals and public research institutions, where some of our brightest minds are working together to discover better antibiotics, new vaccines and more effective cancer treatments—efforts that will enhance and save lives.

Ontario's pharmaceutical and biotechnology sectors together employ over 15,000 Ontarians in very high-quality, high-paying jobs, and there is potential for much, much more.

I was pleased to join the Premier, the member for York Centre, my parliamentary assistant from Mississauga—Streetsville and the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care this morning to announce that we are moving forward quickly with the Next Generation of Jobs Fund.

Our government is investing some \$13.9 million as part of Sanofi Pasteur's \$101.5-million expansion, which includes the construction of a new \$80-million, state-of-the-art research facility and the growth of its research activities in Ontario over the next five years at the company's North Toronto research park.

The project will create 30 new, permanent, high-value jobs and help develop vaccines for diseases like whooping cough and various forms of cancer.

Sanofi already employs 900 employees in Ontario who research, develop, manufacture and market vaccines to Canada and the world. They have a simple vision, the good people at Sanofi Pasteur and Sanofi-Aventis: They have this vision that they want to vaccinate everyone in the world for every preventable disease. What a tremendous aspiration and how wonderful it is that this company is investing even more in the province of Ontario.

These are high-value, high-paying jobs with an impressive multiplier effect whereby for each new position that is created, other industry-related jobs will be created to service the demand.

Our investment has secured—and I want to be clear on this—on behalf of taxpayers, a jobs guarantee and a sustained research guarantee, and it will ensure that Ontario is on the leading edge of vaccine research and development, positioning Ontario to capture a greater share of the global market.

Today, we are joined by two distinguished visitors. I would like to introduce Mr. Mark Lievonen, who is the president and CEO of Sanofi Pasteur Canada. The chap beside him is Mr. Wayne Pisano, who's the CEO of Sanofi-Aventis, which is the parent company of Sanofi Pasteur of Canada. We are delighted that both of you are joining us today. Welcome.

I would like to quote Mark Lievonen, president of Sanofi Pasteur Canada: "Ontario's contribution was an important factor in our ability to attract this investment to Ontario."

The choice in the Sanofi world was to invest this money in Ontario, Pennsylvania or France, and Ontario won that competition to secure these jobs and this investment in our province.

This project, as well, will create some 300 immediate jobs in construction. They are building an \$80-million global research and innovation centre.

Sanofi Pasteur represents the kind of health-related, innovative company that we want to foster and retain in Ontario. Our investment is a statement of our government's commitment to ensure the continued growth of industries like the biopharmaceutical sector that will shape our future and create Ontario's next generation of high-paying jobs.

I believe that we have the talent and resources in this province to compete and to win in this important sector. After all, we in this province are standing on the shoulders of some of medicine's biggest discoveries.

Dr. Frederick Banting discovered insulin just down the street. Stem cells were discovered four decades ago by Dr. Ernest McCulloch and Dr. James Till, two of our most renowned researchers at the Ontario Cancer Centre right here in Toronto. The world's first pacemaker was developed in Ontario.

I'm proud to say that today's investment will help us to continue to build on this legacy of innovation and ingenuity. We are making Ontario the best place to develop new, innovative ideas.

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Just as important, we're making Ontario the best place to translate these ideas into value-added products and services that we can sell to the world and benefit from right here in Ontario. It's part of our government's plan to ensure that Ontario will attract the most investment, create the best-paying jobs and secure the healthiest, brightest future for our families and children.

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Responses?

#### RESEARCH AND INNOVATION

**Ms. Laurie Scott:** I'm pleased to respond, on behalf of the official opposition, to the statement made by the



Minister of Research and Innovation. I also want to thank the representatives from Sanofi for investing in Ontario and being in the Legislature today.

There's no question that not only do we agree it is vital that we be a part of research and innovation technologies, but also that our motivated and talented people deserve a lot of credit from the province of Ontario. We're glad they are being recognized and that investment is coming here today.

It's certainly the government's job to work to ensure there is a climate in the province that forward-thinking companies and investors are going to take notice of and consider for the future.

I would like to add a couple of comments. Despite what the ministry may say, this is not a new announcement. I think this has been announced three times.

**Ms. Lisa MacLeod:** Three times?

**Ms. Laurie Scott:** Yes, three times in the same year, which also relates to the other ministerial statement—the recycling of old announcements. It was mentioned in the budget and in press releases long before today. I know that our friends from the environment industry are here today, and recycling may well apply to some of what they are here to discuss, but I don't think the re-announcement of old announcements is the kind of recycling they are really looking to pursue.

If I'm not mistaken, I believe the Minister of Research and Innovation stated some time ago, with respect to waste diversion, "We have an amazing plan." Of course, we're still waiting to see that plan, but I'll let my colleague the critic for the environment take that forward.

The other point I want to bring forward is: Where is the investment money coming from? I know that the present McGuinty government likes to repackage government monies from other levels. Given their history of doing this, I wonder how much of this money is from federal coffers, from the federal community development trust fund. I'm hoping the minister can answer this.

Thirdly, we have also seen this government, in past investments, show little ability to ensure that grants, loans and programs are used as promised. I know that the turnaround in this proposal is to be 45 days. We're going to wait and see that this does come forward and that the minister does share with us more information as to the effectiveness of this program.

#### ENVIRONMENT INDUSTRY

**Mr. Toby Barrett:** I will respond to the Minister of the Environment. On behalf of John Tory and the PC caucus, I would also like to welcome our guests from the Environment Industry Association who have come to the Legislature for Environment Industry Day.

Ontario's environment industry represents more than 2,400 companies. They contribute well over \$7 billion to our economy and, as we heard earlier, close to 60,000 jobs. I had the opportunity to meet with ONEIA this morning, and I remain impressed with their continuing work to promote environmentally friendly solutions to

the challenges we face. One good example is the climate change adaptation fund proposed for municipalities. Our minister didn't make mention of that, so stay tuned on that one.

As society's attention turns ever more to the impact we have on the world, and at the same time this government passively watches rapidly emerging signs of economic downturn, it's important to recognize the potential of industries like the environmental industry. They will provide us with opportunities to address these challenges in new and beneficial ways.

A healthy environment and a growing economy are not only compatible but also mutually beneficial. The environment industry can create and deliver the new technology and the products that are in demand both here and around the world. They also have the ability to support traditional manufacturers as they become more environmentally efficient.

However, while the industry has made strides, I do hear from industry representatives about a need for a real partnership with the Ontario government to cut through the regulations, to cut through the red tape, to unplug the logjams for project approvals which may prevent many of these companies from moving forward on the kind of good work that they do. Quite simply, one year after our then-environment critic Laurie Scott stated, "This minister and this Premier refuse to move forward and have the courage to make the types of decisions that good leaders make," that does not bode well for the environment.

#### RESEARCH AND INNOVATION

**Mr. Michael Prue:** In response to the Minister of Research and Innovation, I think no one in the room would deny the benefits of 30 new jobs in Ontario, but I have many questions. I think the minister did not give us all of the facts, and I'm hoping he will.

The question that comes to my mind is that, at the cost of \$13.9 million, this works out to \$463,000 per job. At that cost, what guarantees, if any, did the minister get that the jobs would remain in Ontario? He talked about job guarantees but he would not reveal exactly what those guarantees were. What did the government get in terms of the longevity of those jobs? How long are they going to last? We know in the past that when monies have been given to some companies, the jobs are very fleeting indeed.

What guarantees did he get that Ontarians would be hired for the jobs? We do know, in other circumstances, especially with the branch plant economy, that they often come from offshore; they often come from parent companies or other branch plant facilities around the world. How many of these 30 jobs will actually come to Ontarians who are looking for them?

The second set of questions I have involve what is happening to the 200,000 people who have lost manufacturing jobs in the province of Ontario. This government—although they have a plan today for 30 jobs, they have no plan to assist the economy. They have no plan to



assist the companies or the workers in the key manufacturing sector who have lost their jobs. They have no plans to help reduce the cost of electricity in manufacturing or in the forest industry. They have no plans for manufacturing investment tax credits, which surely would save jobs. They have no plans to have a Buy Ontario plan.

Although we in the NDP welcome these 30 jobs, we have to ask the questions. Welcome, the 30 jobs; we only have 199,970 to go.

## ENVIRONMENT INDUSTRY

**Mr. Peter Tabuns:** I rise to respond to the comments from the Minister of the Environment.

First of all, of course, I want to salute the people here from the Ontario Environment Industry Association for the work they do. But I have to say that the nerve of the minister in the statement he made was quite extraordinary. The environmental industry will grow dramatically in this province if we actually take on things like climate change.

The minister said that fighting climate change was the top environmental priority for this government. Graham Murray, in Inside Queen's Park, just recently noted that it was 10 months since the Premier announced his climate change plan and there was still no climate change plan before this Legislature.

When the budget came down, the money was not there to meet their inadequate targets. That's what environmental groups said who reviewed that budget. The Minister of the Environment—

*Interjection.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** The Minister of the Environment.

**Mr. Peter Tabuns:** I think I may have hit a nerve, Mr. Speaker. I hit a nerve.

A few weeks ago, the Globe and Mail reported that this minister, in a conversation, said it would be two or three months before a climate plan would come out.

No legislation has come before us. None is on the order paper to advance a climate protection agenda. This is a government that says that climate change is its number one priority? God help the low-priority items; they will never make it anywhere.

It's no wonder. When I was in Pittsburgh a month ago, I heard from the government of Pennsylvania that they have wind-turbine factories being established there, and solar photovoltaic factories, and they're establishing a plant to make the batteries for hybrid electric vehicles. Are we competing there? Are we taking on those sorts of establishments?

Why is it that ARISE solar technologies has gone to Germany? You could read about it in the Report on Business. Germany actually understands where the future is. Germany is actually willing to make the investment. They are willing to put in place the legal framework; this government is not.

I'll take it down to a very small example. A number of years ago, this government gave itself the power to

legalize clotheslines. I know that clotheslines are pretty hot and heavy—not necessarily the key to saving the world, but they can't even get that one done. Maybe they're holding it for Earth Day so they'll have a big announcement then; I don't know. But to claim that fighting climate change is your top priority—man, “chutzpah” does not quite cover it.

## DEFERRED VOTES

### BUDGET MEASURES AND INTERIM APPROPRIATION ACT, 2008

#### LOI DE 2008 SUR LES MESURES BUDGÉTAIRES ET L'AFFECTATION ANTICIPÉE DE CRÉDITS

Deferred vote on the motion for second reading of Bill 44, An Act respecting Budget measures, interim appropriations and other matters / *Projet de loi 44, Loi concernant les mesures budgétaires, l'affectation anticipée de crédits et d'autres questions.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** We have a deferred vote on the motion for second reading of Bill 44, An Act respecting Budget measures, interim appropriations and other matters.

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

*The division bells rang from 1411 to 1416.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** All those in favour will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

#### Ayes

Aggelonitis, Sophia  
Albanese, Laura  
Arthurs, Wayne  
Balkissoon, Bas  
Bartolucci, Rick  
Bentley, Christopher  
Berardinetti, Lorenzo  
Best, Margaret  
Bradley, James J.  
Brotten, Laurel C.  
Brown, Michael A.  
Brownell, Jim  
Bryant, Michael  
Cansfield, Donna H.  
Caplan, David  
Carroll, Aileen  
Chan, Michael  
Colle, Mike  
Craitor, Kim  
Crozier, Bruce  
Delaney, Bob  
Dhillon, Vic

Dickson, Joe  
Dombrowsky, Leona  
Duguid, Brad  
Duncan, Dwight  
Flynn, Kevin Daniel  
Fonseca, Peter  
Gerretsen, John  
Gravelle, Michael  
Hoy, Pat  
Jaczek, Helena  
Jeffrey, Linda  
Kular, Kuldip  
Kwinter, Monte  
Lalonde, Jean-Marc  
Levac, Dave  
Mangat, Amrit  
Matthews, Deborah  
Mauro, Bill  
McGuinity, Dalton  
McNeely, Phil  
Meilleur, Madeleine  
Milloy, John

Mitchell, Carol  
Moridi, Reza  
Naqvi, Yasir  
Oraziotti, David  
Pendergast, Leeanna  
Phillips, Gerry  
Qaadri, Shafiq  
Ramal, Khalil  
Ramsay, David  
Rinaldi, Lou  
Sandals, Liz  
Sergio, Mario  
Smith, Monique  
Smitherman, George  
Takhari, Harinder S.  
Van Bommel, Maria  
Watson, Jim  
Wilkinson, John  
Wynne, Kathleen O.  
Zimmer, David

#### Nays

Arnott, Ted  
Bailey, Robert  
Barrett, Toby  
Bisson, Gilles

Horwath, Andrea  
Hudak, Tim  
Jones, Sylvia  
Klees, Frank

O'Toole, John  
Prue, Michael  
Runciman, Robert W.  
Savoline, Joyce

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** All those opposed.



Chudleigh, Ted  
DiNovo, Cheri  
Dunlop, Garfield  
Elliott, Christine  
Gélinas, France  
Hardeman, Ernie  
Hillier, Randy

Kormos, Peter  
MacLeod, Lisa  
Marchese, Rosario  
Miller, Norm  
Miller, Paul  
Munro, Julia  
Murdoch, Bill

Scott, Laurie  
Shurman, Peter  
Sterling, Norman W.  
Tabuns, Peter  
Wilson, Jim  
Witmer, Elizabeth  
Yakabuski, John

**The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller):** The ayes are 64; the nays are 33.

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** I declare the bill carried.

*Second reading agreed to.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Shall the bill be ordered for third reading?

**Hon. Dwight Duncan:** I would ask that the bill be referred to the standing committee on finance and economic affairs.

### VISITORS

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** We have a number of guests with us today. I would just remind our guests that we welcome you always to Queen's Park to observe our proceedings. As much as you may be tempted to partake, applaud, cheer etc., we ask that you leave that for the Legislative floor and you not partake in that aspect.

On behalf of the member from Perth-Wellington, we'd like to welcome Carol Shannon and Joan Shannon from Marmora in the east members' gallery. Joan is the member's mother-in-law. Welcome today.

On behalf of the member from York South-Weston: Her brother, Michael Albanese, is in the east members' gallery. Welcome today.

On behalf of the member from Parkdale-High Park: parents and children from Fern Avenue Public School, Keele Street school and Ursula Franklin Academy in the west members' gallery. Welcome today.

On behalf of the member from Toronto-Danforth: in the west public gallery, Shane MacDonald, Alex Bojin, Kendall Wright, Michael Alecsic and Anthony Nguyen. They were gold medalists in the Ontario provincial swimming championships from Riverdale Collegiate.

The following pages have guests with us this afternoon. In the east members' gallery, on behalf of Marco Bellissimo: Anna Bellissimo, his mother; Gianluca Bellissimo, his brother; Christina Bellissimo, his sister; Giuseppina Bellissimo, his grandmother; Maria Figliano, his grandmother; Domenico Figliano, his grandfather; Antoinette DeLongis, his aunt; Rita Aceto, his aunt; Daniela DeLongis, his cousin; Michael DeLongis, his cousin; Michael Aceto, his cousin; and Angela Aceto, his cousin. Welcome to Queen's Park today.

On behalf of page Marcus Glennie, in the west gallery, we'd like to welcome his father, Mike Glennie, here today.

On behalf of page Michael Louws, in the west members' gallery: Neil Louws, his father; Rita Louws, his mother; Kate Louws, his sister; Gay Mostert, his

grandmother; and Katie McCrae, a friend of the family. Welcome today.

As the Speaker is a graduate of the University of Western Ontario, I would like to remind the members of a reception today here at Queen's Park with the University of Western Ontario from 5 to 7 in room 230. We invite all members to come and enjoy a great time at the finest institution in the province.

### ORAL QUESTIONS

#### TOBACCO CONTROL

**Mr. Robert W. Runciman:** My question is for the Minister of Health Promotion. Minister, one of the goals of the Smoke-Free Ontario strategy is "to prevent smoking among Ontario's children, youth and young adults." Minister, I know you are aware of an illegal smoke shop in Caledonia operating on provincial land within metres of an elementary school. We've had reports of children on their bicycles leaving the shop with cartons of cigarettes on their handlebars.

Minister, given your responsibility—don't look elsewhere—for health promotion, do you believe it's appropriate for this store to keep operating and putting children's health at risk?

**Hon. Margaret R. Best:** I have to refer this question to the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services.

**Hon. Rick Bartolucci:** Clearly, our government has been very proactive when it comes to ensuring that we educate the public so that we will diminish the opportunities for people to smoke. We have been very successful. We will continue to advocate and be very strong proponents. In fact, I have to say that there has been more originality coming from this government with regard to smoking cessation than from most governments, and I'm very, very proud of that.

**Mr. Robert W. Runciman:** I'm going to try again. To the missing-in-action Minister of Health Promotion: A study conducted by the Canadian Convenience Stores Association says that 24% of students who smoke are smoking illegal cigarettes—untested, no warnings. According to your own website, Minister—if you've taken time to read it—each year, 90,000 kids in Ontario try smoking. That's an alarming statistic, but an even more alarming fact is that those kids are smoking cheap cigarettes with no idea of what's in the tobacco and no idea of the health risks.

Minister, in good conscience, how can you sit by silently and imperil the health of children, all in the name of political correctness?

**Hon. Rick Bartolucci:** It's really, really mind-boggling. One day, they're supporting cigarettes; the next day, they're saying that we're not doing enough for causing cessation of tobacco. I have to be perfectly



honest that we are committed to reducing the demand for tobacco. We understand that it's crucial that we do that.

I'm pleased to hear from my colleague Minister Best that tobacco consumption in Ontario fell by 31.8% from 2003 to 2006. That's 31.8% from 2003 to 2006. That equals over 4.6 billion less cigarettes. I think that's something that this government should be very proud of and you should be supporting.

**Mr. Robert W. Runciman:** I'm glad the minister is hearing from the Minister of Health Promotion because no one else is. The reality is that the so-called Minister of Health Promotion is no such thing. She's like a false front of a building—nothing behind the facade. She won't even respond to concerns in this place, concerns we've raised about kids' health, and instead refers to someone who fills the air with meaningless rhetoric.

Once again I direct my question to that minister: Will she stop playing politically correct Russian roulette with kids' health? Will she stand up, do her job and fight for the closure of illegal operations threatening children's health? Or will she just simply admit that she's window dressing, step down, and save the taxpayers a salary?

**Hon. Rick Bartolucci:** I think it's—

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Order.

*Interjection.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** No, I'm not stopping the clock.

I'd just ask that we can take the opportunity to—we can get frustrated with members for answering or not answering questions, but we do need to, as much as possible, maintain an air of civility within the place. I ask all members to be conscious of that and keep that in the back of their minds.

Minister?

**Hon. Rick Bartolucci:** One of the lessons that my father taught me a long time ago is that when you're losing an argument, call names. I have to tell you that I am very, very critical of the Leader of the Opposition and the references that he's made to my fellow minister.

But let me talk about this issue. This government is committed to ensuring that tobacco cessation takes place in Ontario. We will continue to work at that. We are committed to ensuring that that happens. I have to tell you that we need the help of everyone in this House to make sure that happens. That type of rhetoric is not healthy for anyone, and you should be ashamed of yourself.

#### SCHOOL TRANSPORTATION FUNDING

**Mrs. Joyce Savoline:** My question is for the Minister of Education. Last week, I raised the issue of the closing of Phelps elementary, a rural school, and that young kids were now going to be bused at least three hours a day. Today, we learned that Fitzroy Centennial will be the third school to close in the West Carleton board. Yesterday, the issue of school buses was raised in this House, which is of particular concern to these parents whose kids

will now be on longer bus rides because their rural schools are closing.

Minister, will you please address the issue of funding for school transportation?

1430

**Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne:** I'd actually be happy to address this issue, because we have been working with our education partners, including the Ontario School Bus Association, and we've been increasing funding and in fact have been the first government to reform the transportation funding formula. We've implemented a successful reform and we have boards across the province now working in consortia so that students are getting better service, and school boards are working together.

We've provided \$10 million to provide a wage enhancement for school bus drivers. We've also provided \$15.4 million as a benchmark increase to address cost pressures like fuel, and we're adding an additional \$1.7 million to allow boards to address cost pressures associated with increasing enrolment.

We know that the needs for buses don't go down when enrolment goes down, so we've been increasing funding to transportation across the province.

**Mrs. Joyce Savoline:** We know that this government is refusing to specifically designate funds for school buses, and as a result, funds that should be going to buy new buses or increase bus drivers' meagre salaries are being redirected to other areas within the boards.

If you do not intend to keep your promise to keep rural schools open, will you at least commit to specifically designating funds for school board transportation?

**Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne:** I met with the Ontario School Bus Association last week. We had a very good exchange. We have an ongoing dialogue. In fact, they are very happy to be working with a government that's willing to listen to them about their issues. They're also very happy to be working with a government that is increasing funding and is willing to work with them on the issue of wages, for example, which is a very important issue, especially with small and medium operators. They're also pleased that we are going to address the issues of small and medium operators, that we're very, very concerned that those operations stay in place.

We've increased funding for wages, we've increased funding on cost benchmarks, and boards are working together to provide better and more efficient service for their students.

**Mrs. Joyce Savoline:** It is clear that the McGuinty government did manage to see fit to throw some one-time slush fund money in the direction of school transportation. They gave them a mere 10-cent raise, from 83 cents to 93 cents a litre. That increase was no doubt welcome, but cold comfort to those operators who are paying \$1.30 per litre for diesel, with no decrease in the offing for gas.

So, Minister, why won't you envelope school bus funding and address the cost pressures faced by these school bus operators?



**Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne:** It makes me very proud to be part of a government that is paying close attention to all the services that are required by students in our system, including transportation services, because there have been governments in the past that did not pay attention to those services to help kids get to school, to make sure they had the services that they want.

As a result of the transportation reviews that we've been doing, there are nine boards in the province that have enhanced funding even since those reviews began.

As I said previously, the Ontario School Bus Association is very pleased that we are working with them, that we are addressing the issue of their wages, and that we understand that the cost benchmarks—which is why we did the cost benchmark study—have to be increased. That's why we continue to increase funding even though enrolment is declining.

#### SPORTS AND RECREATION FUNDING

**M<sup>me</sup> France Gélinas:** Ma question est pour le premier ministre. Roughly \$20 billion of health care spending is on illnesses that are largely preventable. One in four kids are overweight, and close to half of all Ontarians are obese. Obesity costs Ontario \$1.6 billion annually.

One of the most effective ways to prevent disease and fight obesity is for people to be physically active. When will the Ministry of Health Promotion live up to its name and provide the resources needed to maintain and improve sports and recreation programming and facilities?

**Hon. Dalton McGuinty:** To the Minister of Health Promotion.

**Hon. Margaret R. Best:** The Minister of Health Promotion works with our partners—community organizations, public health units, other ministries and other levels of government—to help public understanding of the common factors that lead to type 2 diabetes. These risk factors include unhealthy eating, physical inactivity, overweight and obesity. That is why our government has committed \$190 million over three years for a new chronic disease prevention and management strategy, starting with diabetes.

In June 2006, our government launched a \$10-million healthy eating and active living action plan. As part of the plan, we partnered with the Dietitians of Canada to—

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Supplementary.

**M<sup>me</sup> France Gélinas:** The Premier and Minister of Health Promotion cannot deny that sports and recreation facilities across Ontario are crumbling. In Sudbury, it's the Barry Downe arena and the Falconbridge school that have closed; in Hamilton, it's the Chedoke ski hill and the rugby field; and in Cornwall, the wading pools.

Today, with parents, children and concerned citizens, the NDP proposes a Communities at Play fund to provide annual and reliable funding towards sports and recreation facilities. Will the Premier acknowledge that our sports and recreation facilities are in crisis and commit to long-term, sustainable funding through the Ministry of Health Promotion?

**Hon. Margaret R. Best:** Our government is committed to promoting healthy and active living in Ontario. Through the communities in action fund, we provide \$7.5 million annually to community recreation organizations to help increase opportunities for more people to become active. Over the last four years, approximately \$25 million in CIAF grants have been awarded to over 800 organizations at the provincial and local levels. Approximately one million Ontarians have benefited from this program to date. Our government's investment will increase participation in community sports and physical activities and help remove barriers to participation for priority groups.

**M<sup>me</sup> France Gélinas:** We are talking about sports and recreation assets, facilities. They were originally funded with significant help from the province. Back then, it wasn't a "community problem" to maintain those facilities, like the government claims today.

Across the province, 50% of our recreational assets are approaching the end of their useful lives. In Sudbury, Mayor Rodriguez says, "Our existing recreational facilities are aging and our operational costs are increasing. This NDP proposal would help to bring some much-needed assistance."

Will the Premier make Communities at Play a reality and invest not \$5 million but \$75 million annually in sports and recreation programming and facilities through the Ministry of Health Promotion?

**Hon. Margaret R. Best:** Our government is committed to promoting healthy, active living. That is why over the past two years we have put our money there and we have invested a total of \$136 million in 77 sports and recreational infrastructure-related projects. Our investment in sports facilities supports our Active 2010 strategy, a comprehensive plan to increase sports and physical activity participation by at least 55% for adults by the year 2010.

As part of our government's municipal infrastructure investment initiatives in 2008, we committed \$61.5 million to 29 sports and recreational infrastructure projects in Ontario.

#### MUNICIPAL INFRASTRUCTURE

**Mr. Gilles Bisson:** My question is to the Premier. Premier, in response to the tragic overpass collapse in Laval, Quebec, which killed five people, the Quebec government decided to assume the responsibility for municipal bridges in communities of less than 100,000 people. You would know that the city of Timmins' council has endorsed this Quebec policy and the notion is gaining support among small communities across this province.

1440

Since your government has refused to create long-term sustainable funding programs to municipal infrastructure, will you, as Premier, at least consider this modest Quebec proposal?



**Hon. Dalton McGuinty:** To the Minister of Transportation.

**Hon. James J. Bradley:** I thank the Premier very much for appropriately sending the question to me, and I thank the member for asking the question, because it's a good question. Many of his questions are very good.

I have to say, first of all, that you will be aware that this government has transferred literally millions of dollars to municipalities for the purpose—

**Hon. David Caplan:** Hundreds of millions.

**Hon. James J. Bradley:** Hundreds of millions, my colleague the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal tells me—for the purpose of dealing with bridges and roads and municipal infrastructure as a whole. We will continue, as a government, being a full partner with those municipalities. You will note that this year there was some additional funding, because I think there was a recognition that there were some major challenges in places such as Timmins. In addition to that, other municipal infrastructure programs are available for them in order that they're able to access them for funding to assist in the refurbishing and establishment of new bridges and roads.

**Mr. Gilles Bisson:** You'll know that a lot of municipalities, because of downloading of provincial highways onto municipalities, are having to maintain bridges that they did not have to pay for before. I raised in this House yesterday the situation on Highway 67 where you've got a bridge that connects Highway 11 and Highway 101, two provincial highways, and here we have a situation where the bridge is down to one lane because it's unsafe.

So I say again, the province of Quebec has understood that municipalities don't have the capacity to maintain these types of bridges. I ask you very squarely again, will you do what Quebec did and at least re-upload the maintenance of bridges for municipalities with less than 100,000 population?

**Hon. James J. Bradley:** As the member would be aware, there is a dialogue going on at the present time between municipalities and the provincial government, and that dialogue—

**Ms. Andrea Horwath:** It's all water under the bridge.

**Hon. James J. Bradley:** The member from Hamilton Centre intervenes. I don't know whether I should answer the question. Former Premier Davis was here the other day at an event. He had the tactic of answering the interjection instead of the original question and, by the end, there was no answer to the question. But I will try to answer the question.

You know that there's a dialogue going on, that there's an agreement that is going to be reached between municipalities and the provincial government, led by the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. At that table, I can assure you that topics such as responsibility for bridges and various roads are right on the front burner of the discussions taking place. I wouldn't want to pre-empt the final results of those discussions.

**Mr. Gilles Bisson:** You will know that the front burner is getting a lot closer to the kitchen than you realize. In Chatham-Kent last week, we had a bridge that collapsed. If we wait any longer than we have to—and I don't have a lot of confidence this is going to be a quick fix by your minister—we will be in a situation where bridges in this province may be unsafe and a danger to the public.

The province of Quebec was clear. They said, "Municipalities under 100,000—re-upload the responsibility to the province." I ask you again, are you prepared to upload the responsibility for bridge maintenance for municipalities under 100,000 as a safety concern for the province of Ontario and to help our municipalities?

**Hon. James J. Bradley:** As I just stated to the member, I'm one who believes that when you have negotiations going on—and you're familiar with your former responsibilities, dealing with collective agreements—I think it's very unwise to try to predict what's going to come out of those negotiations.

You mention the city of Chatham. I think it was two years ago, the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal tells me, that they received the funding for that very bridge. There are other municipalities. I have a long list—I won't go through them—of municipalities that received funding for these bridges, and many of them are in opposition ridings. I assure you that is the case.

I want to compliment the member because I think he has raised a very legitimate question in the House. As a result of the discussions taking place with municipalities, I hope this matter is resolved to the satisfaction of all concerned.

#### DISCLOSURE OF MEDICAL INFORMATION

**Mr. Frank Klees:** My question is also to the Minister of Transportation. It relates to the fact that his ministry has apparently been collecting personal medical information on Ontarians, whether they hold a driver's licence or not.

Anna Medeiros, as reported in the news today, never applied for a driver's licence but received a notice from his ministry saying that her licence was suspended for medical reasons.

What is happening? We know that physicians have an obligation—a mandatory obligation—to report, but the intention was always that that be for drivers, for people who hold drivers' licences in this province.

Instead, his ministry is collecting private medical information on people who were never licensed and may never be. I want to ask the minister if he believes it's appropriate. And if he does, will he refer the matter to the privacy commissioner of Ontario for her opinion?

**Hon. James J. Bradley:** I can say first of all to the member that he would know that for some period of time now it is compulsory for members of the medical profession to report to the Ministry of Transportation on medical conditions that would be such that a person would be incapable of driving, in the opinion of that



particular person—that is, the medical professional—and they have been doing so for some period of time.

This is always very difficult. I know that the member, as a former minister—it's fair enough to say I've heard your conversations, where you've been genuinely concerned about that aspect of things. It's always difficult when information is provided and people are informed that they cannot drive any longer. That's a great concern to them. It's understandable. On the other hand, the ministry has an obligation to ensure that all who have an affliction of some kind that would prevent them from driving are not behind the wheel of a car until they've been cleared.

**Mr. Frank Klees:** I have no argument with the mandatory reporting of medical conditions. I am a strong supporter, as we all are in this House, of safety on the roads and for the protection of those who have medical conditions that challenge their driving ability. This is about an issue, though, that I believe the minister has a responsibility to address, that the regulations are clearly unclear about the fact that that reporting should be for individuals who hold driver's licences.

Not every condition should be reported to his ministry so that perhaps at some point in the future his ministry is holding information relating to a medical condition that has nothing to do with driving and that may well be used against an individual at some point down the road.

Will the minister—in the interest of doing the right thing—refer this matter to the privacy commissioner of Ontario for her opinion so that this matter can be resolved?

**Hon. James J. Bradley:** As the member would know, this is not something that occurred yesterday or the day before. This has been ongoing. This policy, for some period of time, has been ongoing.

The member would know that when information is provided by medical authorities to the Ministry of Transportation, it is done because there are a number of people who, at the age of 16, are eligible to become drivers. It is the opinion of the members of the medical profession and the ministry officials that it is valuable information to know that if someone is seeking to have a driver's licence, they in fact are able to meet all the provisions of that driver's licence by having information which is available to them about their medical condition.

I know that's always a difficult thing to do. We will consult widely on this particular matter, but I want to assure the member that this is not something that happened overnight. It's been in process for a long period of time.

1450

#### SCHOOL POOLS

**Ms. Cheri DiNovo:** My question is for the Premier. Last year, 11-year-old Michaela Larrondo-Mioceovich personally asked the Premier to do something to keep her pool open at Fern public school.

His response was, and I quote: "Sweetheart, I will personally look into what your pool needs."

This Premier has broken his promise to Michaela. Why is this government doing nothing to keep Michaela's pool open, or other pools across Toronto?

**Hon. Dalton McGuinty:** I'm delighted to take the question; I think I owe Michaela the courtesy of a response. I don't recall the exact conversation, but she remains a sweetheart nonetheless.

The issue had to do with whether or not the provincial government, on behalf of Ontario taxpayers, is going to provide extraordinary funding for Toronto District School Board pools. I want to be direct to Michaela, to her parents, to all students and the community as a whole that we are not prepared to do that, and I'll tell you why.

There is nothing more important to me personally than the education of our children. We have two million of them in over 5,000 publicly funded schools around the province. We've increased funding dramatically during the course of the past four years, in the face of declining enrolments. We think we've provided the Toronto District School Board with an abundance of funding. They've got to make some important choices as to whether or not they want to maintain pools as a special feature of the education they offer within the city of Toronto.

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Supplementary.

**Mr. Rosario Marchese:** Premier, prior to 1998, Toronto school pools were paid for by the citizens of Toronto. These pools are now under your responsibility, your control, and in my view, it is your job to keep them open. The Premier must keep his word to Michaela, who remembers the discussion very well, and must assume his responsibility. Will the Premier honour the investment that generations of Torontonians have made, and save the Toronto pools by adopting our \$75-million Community at Play plan?

**Hon. Dalton McGuinty:** Again, if we look at what we've done specifically for the Toronto District School Board, notwithstanding the fact they have 31,000 fewer students, we've increased funding by 18%—that's \$359 million more. We have in place 1,175 new teachers since 2003. We have 2,423 school repair projects either completed or under way. We think we've provided a fairly dramatic injection of new funding to the Toronto District School Board in the face of declining enrolment. The TDSB must now make an important decision as to the priority they wish to attach to their pools under these circumstances. We think we've done, in fairness, what we should do for the Toronto District School Board, which is to dramatically increase resources for it.

#### MINING INDUSTRY

**Mrs. Carol Mitchell:** My question is for the Minister of Labour. Mining is considered one of the most dangerous occupations in the world. Every day, workers put themselves at risk going underground to extract salt, nickel, gold, copper, platinum and other materials. I



understand that the Mines and Aggregate Safety and Health Association is holding their annual health and safety conference in Sudbury from April 15 to 17. Conference speakers will talk about how the mining industry, employers and employees continue to work together to find new ways to ensure a safe work environment. Would the minister tell us what the government is doing to ensure that workplaces are safe for Ontario miners?

**Hon. Brad Duguid:** I want to thank the member for Huron-Bruce for the question and for the interest she has in this particular topic.

I've had the pleasure of meeting with representatives of the Mines and Aggregate Safety and Health Association, as well as the Ontario Mining Association, including Rowland Howe, from Sifto Canada Corp., which I understand is located in the member's very riding. I want to assure the member and all members of this Legislature that I and this government understand the importance of mining workplace health and safety.

The ministry continues to work with labour and industry representatives through the mining legislative review committee to advance workplace health and safety by improving and updating existing legislation. To that end, the ministry has enhanced mining regulations and updated training regulations to reflect developments in this industry. The ministry's inspection strategy identifies major hazards to workers in underground and surface mines and rigorous compliance. It's an issue of great importance to this government.

**Mrs. Carol Mitchell:** Thank you for that information. I do want to commend the minister and the ministry staff for the excellent work they are doing to ensure that all workers in Ontario are in safe working environments.

I want to reiterate that the hard-working men and women who work in this industry, the dedicated employees who are also constituents of mine, put themselves at risk going underground every single day, and I want to commend them for the work they do. Considering the changes to the regulations and the ministry inspection strategy, would the minister tell us how this has improved safety?

**Hon. Brad Duguid:** I want to thank the member again for her question. I think all members of this Legislature recognize the long and proud history that mining has had here in this province.

I want to report to the Legislature that fatalities have dropped nearly 50% since the previous decade. That's a very dramatic improvement—a very dramatic improvement indeed. Last year we had four fatalities. I think every one of us would suggest that's four too many, so we still have more work to do, and we look forward to working with the mining industry to improve that even more.

I would also like to point out that lost-time-from-injury rates for miners have dropped 56% since 1995. Again, that's a very dramatic decrease in injuries to miners across this province. At the same time, we still have more work to do.

I want to commend the mining industry for the work they've done, in partnership with our government, in reducing injuries in the mining industry.

## PROPERTY TAXATION

**Mr. Tim Hudak:** A question to the Premier: As you know, this fall taxpayers will receive a triple whammy of property assessment increases all at once. This of course is courtesy of Dalton McGuinty's cynical move to freeze assessments until, coincidentally, after the last election. Today, the Coalition After Property Tax Reform and the Waterfront Ratepayers After Fair Taxation released a report by respected real estate firm Cushman and Wakefield LePage to determine the likely outcome for Ontario homeowners. The result: Homeowners can expect up to a 154% increase in their assessments this fall. In light of this dramatic news, Premier, will you agree to cap property assessment increases to protect Ontario homeowners?

**Hon. Dalton McGuinty:** To the Minister of Finance.

**Hon. Dwight Duncan:** We don't share the same view as the opposition on capping. No, we won't do that. That would have the effect of shifting the property tax burden from high-growth areas to low-growth areas. We don't think it's the right answer over time.

In fact, even the member himself has said that this was a problem his government created. And in the *St. Catharines Standard*, March 2006, the member sitting behind him, Mr Yakabuski, when asked if the former government under Premier Harris bungled the property tax evaluation system, said, "Yes, it seems apparently so."

We agree with Mr. Hudak and Mr. Yakabuski that in fact they bungled the system. We think their proposal now would in fact make it worse. We don't support capping. In fact we have a four-year assessment phase-in which we think will help the average Ontario property taxpayer manage assessment changes.

**Mr. Tim Hudak:** The minister well knows that for assessments at that level, if you phase it in over years, that's up to a 40% increase per year. Your Toronto-area MPPs are going to be quite alarmed at assessment increases, predicted to be up to 102% in St. Paul's, 51% in Willowdale. Minister, this means whether they live in Grimsby, Ottawa or London, homeowners can expect high double-digit or triple-digit increases in the property assessments this September. The Homestead Act is before the Assembly today. It would cap skyrocketing assessments at a maximum of 5% a year. Given this result from the real estate firm, will the minister agree to cap assessments before taxpayers get hit with a triple whammy this fall?

**Hon. Dwight Duncan:** No, we won't. Just to be very clear, what the member is suggesting, we simply do not share that view. In fact, assessment changes don't necessarily lead to property tax increases.

But you know what he could have helped us with? Today, just an hour ago, he voted against a property tax grant for seniors: \$1 billion dollars over five years. He



voted against it, and every member of that caucus just voted against it. And they voted against the senior property tax credit grant not on one occasion but three occasions. You messed the system up. We're certainly not going to rely on you for advice now. We reject capping, and why wouldn't you have voted to give our senior citizens a billion dollars in property tax relief over the next five years? You guys just don't get it.

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### SCHOOL POOLS

**Mr. Michael Prue:** My question is to the Minister of Health Promotion: The closure of 23 Toronto school pools at the end of this school year and another 16 pools in June 2009 should be a very real embarrassment, not only to this government, but to this ministry. These school pools are this government's responsibility. The city and the Toronto District School Board pools service a total of five million swimmers per year. Some of those swimmers are in the gallery here today. How could the minister say that she is focused on health promotion when she is helping in the shutdown of the pools for which Torontonians have paid very dearly over a great number of years?

**Hon. Margaret R. Best:** I'll pass the question to the Minister of Education.

**Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne:** I think the member opposite knows very well that the community assets—these pools—were paid for by Toronto tax dollars, and that's why I've been saying for many days that the Toronto District School Board and the city of Toronto need to have this conversation about their city infrastructure.

Over the last four years, despite the fact that the Toronto District School Board has 31,000 fewer students, we have increased funding by nearly \$360 million. In fact, we put in place a grant—\$5.4 million this year in the program enhancement grant—to apply directly to sports programming and arts programming. If the Toronto District School Board were to make that a priority, they could take that money and apply it to the swimming pools.

The other reality is that there are 90-plus schools that are surplus in the Toronto District School Board that could be leveraged for capital dollars.

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Supplementary?

**Mr. Peter Tabuns:** My question is to the Minister of Health Promotion: This morning, parents and children from tens of schools across this city came to a press conference to ask to save their school pools. In my hand, I hold 15,000 signatures from citizens across Toronto asking to save their school pools. We have signatures from Fern, Malvern, North Toronto, Ursula Franklin, Earl Beatty, Weston, R.H. King, Downsview Secondary, Gordon Brown, Queen Alexandra, Sir Wilfrid Laurier, Bowmore, Deer Park, Glenview, Duke of Connaught, D.A. Morrison, Glen Ames, Earl Grey, Swansea, Annette, Fern, Winona, St. Andrew, Williamson and many others.

Minister, will you turn your back on these students?

**Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne:** Far from turning our backs on the students of Toronto or anywhere else in Ontario, we have been investing in publicly funded education, including the infrastructure of our schools, since we came into office. We have invested \$4 billion in publicly funded education since we came into office. I would just remind the member opposite that it is this government that has increased funding in the face of declining enrolment. It is this government that has put in place a program enhancement grant specifically to address the issues of sports programming and arts programming.

I think that absolutely the opposite is true in terms of our support for students. We are committed to making sure that kids in this province have the healthiest experience at school that they can. Our daily physical activity, our nutrition guidelines—we are committed to making sure that kids have the resources they need.

The Toronto District School Board, if they choose to make this a priority—I believe that, within their resources, they can—

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Thank you. New question.

### FLOODING

**Mr. Lou Rinaldi:** My question is to the Minister of Natural Resources. Minister, as we move to spring after an unusually wet and snowy winter, many communities across the province have been experiencing flooding. My community is being warned that water levels along the Trent River are increasing rapidly and are expected to keep rising over the next couple of weeks as the northern snowpack continues to melt. These conditions will affect some of my constituents, particularly those living in the low-lying flood plain areas from Rice Lake to Trenton.

Clearly, flooding has the potential to have devastating effects, including property damage and public safety concerns, particularly if people aren't adequately warned. Minister, can you outline for the House what steps our government has taken to prepare and adequately warn communities that are at risk of flooding?

**Hon. Donna H. Cansfield:** I thank the member for his comments and also for his support, because I know the city of Belleville is currently undergoing some strain with flooding.

What we did—first time ever—is put in place a web-site where you can go to get up-to-date information through the MNR site on pre-flood, flooding and post-flood: what to do in the event, who to speak with, and in the event of emergency.

What we've also done: I wrote to every member of Parliament, regardless of politics, who had concerns in their areas, to identify those concerns, to ensure that they, as well as every reeve and mayor in municipalities, were aware ahead of time. That happened about a month ago.

Since that time, we've been working with our conservation authorities, ensuring that all flood warnings,



whether high advisory, flooding or potential, are identified and go out to those municipalities. We have people on-site working with the emergency response, and we are currently monitoring through 4,000 monitors in 1,200 stations across this province.

**Mr. Lou Rinaldi:** I understand that the Minister of Natural Resources is responsible for flood forecasting and that flood advisories and warnings are then communicated to municipalities and local conservation authorities, which have plans in place to deal with flood situations.

However, I'm also concerned at various reports of critical flooding in communities surrounding my riding, such as Belleville and Peterborough. I can certainly empathize with the many residents who are experiencing the inconveniences and disruption to their lives that flooding brings.

Minister, can you outline to the House what our government's role is in a situation when a state of emergency is declared and if there are any programs in place to help affected communities?

**Hon. Donna H. Cansfield:** One of the first things we did, for example, in Belleville, was that we had people on the ground—we have 14 field officers. We work very closely with the emergency management folks to ensure that they have up-to-date, current information along with their municipality. We've given them 20,000 sandbags, and there are another 15,000 on the way.

In addition to that, we work with the other ministries. We're on the management side, but there is assistance through housing and also through emergency response in the event that flooding is severe. So we do the management and we work with the conservation authorities. When we're asked for emergency response, we respond immediately, and then we bring in the necessary tools we need to help those communities deal with very severe flooding.

## NATIVE LAND DISPUTE

**Mr. Toby Barrett:** To the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs: Your government's principal representative at the Six Nations negotiating table—this is according to the Bradford Expositor and the Tekawennake—visited the Six Nations Confederacy last week and proposed a halt to development along parts of the Grand River in return for an end to native protests.

Minister, is it true that your government has now proposed a two-year moratorium on development for certain no-go properties to be selected by Six Nations?

**Hon. Michael Bryant:** The parties are certainly always talking—continuing to talk. I've spoken with developers affected on this issue and with the mayor, and obviously the member for Brant continues to try to facilitate.

Yes, there are discussions as well with Haudenosaunee Six Nations. All parties are seeking a solution that would be to the satisfaction of the Haudenosaunee Six Nations, the province and municipal representatives. And yes,

we'll continue to pursue that, and the moment there is a decision by all three parties, certainly this House will be the first to know.

**Mr. Toby Barrett:** Well, your government already froze development on 10 properties owned by the Ontario Realty Corp., not only at DCE but also the Burtch Correctional Centre, Sprucedale correctional centre, a horticultural research farm, a former OPP detachment at Simcoe, two MTO yards, the Cayuga courthouse and two provincial parks in Haldimand.

1510

Land dispute protesters have killed many projects and subdivisions along the Grand River, certainly in Brantford and Haldimand county. The operative phrase locally is, "If you build it, they will come."

I realize you have a PR problem with ongoing protest, but your proposal now is to stop development. Is this your version of militant greenbeltism? What does this tell future builders and investors? Why do you negotiate with lawbreakers?

Minister, my question: Will you now stop negotiations until this protesting stops?

**Hon. Michael Bryant:** Our approach is the approach recommended by the Ipperwash commission. The Ipperwash commission made recommendations coming out of a public inquiry. It was a public inquiry that not only dealt with what happened in 1995 but also made consideration of what was happening in that region that the member is speaking of, and generally.

Those recommendations say, first and foremost, that all parties need to be engaged in negotiations, the goal being an agreement, an agreement that could see the community, the townsfolk of Caledonia and the people of Haudenosaunee Six Nations get back to where they have been for most of their history, which has been a time of living in harmony, working together, going to school together, shopping together. We're going to continue to try and achieve that result again.

## PROPERTY TAXATION

**Mr. Michael Prue:** My question is to the Premier. Today, the Coalition After Property Tax Reform released a report showing that in a number of neighbourhoods in Toronto, house prices went up over 50% in just three years, between 2004 and 2007.

Those on fixed incomes, including a great many seniors, simply can't afford to be hit with three years of price increases that will come their way this fall. The \$250 in the budget simply won't cut it. The NDP has proposed a freeze-til-sale assessment model that would take the volatility completely out of the system.

Will you continue doing next to nothing, the doing next to nothing that puts people at risk of losing their homes, or will you commit to something that really works, like a freeze-til-sale system, today?

**Hon. Dalton McGuinty:** To the Minister of Finance.



**Hon. Dwight Duncan:** We disagree with the member's proposal to freeze assessments. We have brought in a four-year reassessment phase-in.

What the member opposite alleges would occur is in fact the opposite. In fact, it would create inequities right on blocks within communities and across municipalities. We don't think that is the right way to go. We believe that the four-year phase-in that we have proposed, coupled with the tools that municipalities have available to them, can help address the issue, and that these assessments won't in fact necessarily lead to increases in the property taxes of residents.

**Mr. Michael Prue:** This is an answer that is rich coming from a party that before the last election froze the assessments for two years to get you over that hump.

According to Bob Topp of the coalition, "Phasing in the increases may help ease the pain, but it doesn't heal the wound." And the wound he's talking about is the extreme volatility in any market-based assessment system such as Ontario's.

On this side of the House, in the NDP, we believe that seniors and others on fixed incomes shouldn't be forced out of their long-time homes by the arbitrary volatility of property markets. You must think so too because you put something in the budget.

Will you commit to freeze-til-sale today, or will you continue to allow many people to be at risk of being forced out of their homes by a deeply flawed assessment system?

**Hon. Dwight Duncan:** The member opposite is wrong. Our system will not create volatility.

What is rich is a member who one and a quarter hours ago voted against a \$1-billion package of property tax relief for seniors that kicks in this year. Why did you vote that way an hour ago? Why didn't you support that clause in our bill? I would say to him. And I would remind the member that he also voted against the senior property tax credit in the 2006 budget and the 2007 budget.

This government has set about to bring stability to property taxes, stability to assessments, to give predictability for our seniors and to give them property tax relief; 550,000 seniors across this province will benefit from a \$500 grant next year, and you, sir, voted against it one and one quarter hours ago. Shame on you. Support this government's property tax reform.

## RESEARCH AND INNOVATION

**Mr. Monte Kwinter:** My question is for the Minister of Research and Innovation. Pharmaceutical companies are important contributors to research and innovation in Ontario, spending \$550 million in R&D in 2006 and providing nearly 15,000 highly paid jobs to Ontarians. These companies invest in Ontario's universities, hospitals and other public research institutions where some of our brightest minds are working together to discover better antibiotics, new vaccines and more effective

cancer treatments, efforts that will enhance and save lives.

In my riding of York Centre, Sanofi Pasteur employs more than 900 people who research, develop, manufacture and market vaccines in Canada and around the world. Our government has launched the biopharmaceutical investment program as part of our \$1.15-billion Next Generation of Jobs Fund. Can you please outline how this investment is creating and securing high-paying jobs right here in Ontario?

**Hon. John Wilkinson:** I'm delighted, and I want to thank the good member for York Centre for being part of our historic announcement today where we are taking our global research excellence and converting it into the next generation of excellent Ontario jobs right here in the province that we love.

The good member has a long history with both his riding and the company in question, and I want to applaud him for his advocacy. I'm proud to say that we're investing some \$13.9 million as part of Sanofi Pasteur Canada's \$101.5-million investment in our province in regard to new global research for vaccines. This will include the construction of a new \$80-million, state-of-the-art facility and the growth of its research facilities in Ontario over the next five years at the company's North Toronto research park. This project will immediately create some 300 new construction jobs, secure over 900 jobs that are existing, add another 30 high-value jobs, secure over—

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Thank you. Supplementary.

**Mr. Monte Kwinter:** I was pleased to join the Premier and the minister to make this announcement this morning. Minister, Sanofi Pasteur has four sites around the world where it conducts R&D. They have many choices as to where they can expand, and the competition for expansion is stiff. In making decisions regarding where to invest in new R&D, they consider factors like the availability of skilled workers and resources. They also take into account broader factors such as the overall business climate.

Ontario's new biopharmaceutical investment program is making Ontario's business climate even more attractive. Mark Lievonen, president of Sanofi Pasteur, who was here earlier today, said of Ontario's investment, "Thanks to the partnership, we have been able to increase the footprint and impact of our investment. Ontario's contribution was an important factor in our ability to attract this investment to Ontario." Can you please outline what we're doing to bring jobs and investment to Ontario?

**Hon. John Wilkinson:** As I was saying, we secured over half a billion dollars' worth of research and development over the next seven years by our good friends at Sanofi Pasteur. We know on this side of the House that that cutting-edge research is the greatest advantage we have if we're going to land the new commercial opportunities of turning those vaccines that they're working on—a new vaccine for pertussis,



whooping cough; a new vaccine for colorectal cancer; a new vaccine for melanoma, skin cancer. Wouldn't it be wonderful if we discovered here in Ontario that the jobs to serve mankind are right here in Ontario because of the leadership of members like the member from York Centre?

I was talking to my friends opposite. Their leader, Mr. Tory, had said that our approach is flawed, but their critic came in here today and congratulated us. I appreciate the fact that in front of the CEO of Sanofi Pasteur, they actually applauded it. If only our federal cousins would actually applaud what we're doing in this province, standing up for Ontario and the jobs—

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Thank you. New question.

1520

## ANIMAL PROTECTION LEGISLATION

**Mr. Garfield Dunlop:** My question is to the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services. Minister, recently you introduced Bill 50, the Provincial Animal Welfare Act, which you hailed as an act to regulate roadside zoos. We're starting to get a few mixed messages on Bill 50.

Minister, can you explain to the House what impact, if any, this bill will have on those citizens participating in hunting and angling and what impact, if any, Bill 50 will have on farmers and farm animals?

**Hon. Rick Bartolucci:** I think we were very clear at the press conference when we introduced the legislation that other acts would obviously not be tampered with. We have to ensure that farm animals are regulated by OMAFRA.

We will ensure that what we're dealing with is the care of animals. We will state what our mandate is. We will ensure that we have the toughest laws in Canada. We will ensure that finally, with the bringing of age of the animal welfare act, we will be able to illustrate and promote legislation that is the best in Canada.

**Mr. Garfield Dunlop:** Minister, I can't find any local federation of agriculture that is even aware of the contents of this bill. They only heard about it on the day that you made the announcement. As recently as last evening, at an Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters reception here at Queen's Park, I was informed that OFAH has some real concerns about this bill and has had very little input.

My question to the minister is: Will you commit to this House today that during the drafting of regulations relating to Bill 50, you will include representatives from hunting, fishing and agricultural organizations and use their expertise in drafting the regulations for this bill?

**Hon. Rick Bartolucci:** That's a legitimate question. It's a question that deserves a legitimate answer. Certainly, we had great input from all different stakeholders in Ontario with regard to that. That's why we got back the following endorsements.

From the World Society for the Protection of Animals: "For years, WSPA has witnessed and fought against the suffering of countless animals in roadside zoos.

"We look forward to working with the government in this positive new direction."

The Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, chief executive officer Kate MacDonald: "We are pleased that the government has recognized the need to modernize and toughen animal welfare laws and create stiffer penalties for those convicted."

We were very inclusive in our consultation. We will continue that as we work through this legislation.

## FLOODING

**Ms. Andrea Horwath:** My question is to the Minister of Natural Resources. It's regarding the fact that the Liberal McGuinty government has very little going for it in terms of a plan to deal with all of the flooding that's happening across this province as we speak.

I have to say that the city of Hamilton experienced a similar flooding problem back in 2006, and this government did absolutely nothing to help them out with that problem. Now we hear earlier today that the government thinks that 14 monitors and 30,000 sandbags are enough to deal with the problem, but that is not a plan.

Will this minister offer up a proper flood relief plan or will she once again leave flood victims and municipalities holding the bag—or should I say "the bags"?

**Hon. Donna H. Cansfield:** It's unfortunate that the member wasn't listening. In fact, there are—

*Interjection.*

**Hon. Donna H. Cansfield:** If she would be quiet, she could listen now.

There are 4,000 monitors in 1,200 stations across this province. They work through the water monitoring station in Peterborough. What I was referring to was that on-site there are 14 people in Belleville dealing with a flooding situation now. So we work very closely.

I would be more than happy to take the member through the plan.

## PETITIONS

### LORD'S PRAYER

**Mr. Jim Wilson:** I just want to thank Trinity United Church in Beeton for sending me this.

"Petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Premier Dalton McGuinty has called on the Ontario Legislature to consider removing the Lord's Prayer from its daily proceedings; and

"Whereas the Lord's Prayer has been an integral part of our parliamentary heritage that was first established in 1793 under Lieutenant Governor John Graves Simcoe; and



"Whereas the Lord's Prayer is today a significant part of the religious heritage of millions of Ontarians of culturally diverse backgrounds;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to continue its long-standing practice of using the Lord's Prayer as part of its daily proceedings."

I agree with this petition and I'm signing it.

### HOME CARE

**M<sup>me</sup> France Gélinas:** I have a petition of over 104 names from SEIU and the people of Thunder Bay.

"Whereas the Ontario government has continued the practice of competitive bidding for home care services; and

"Whereas the competitive bidding process has increased the privatization of Ontario's health care delivery, in direct violation of the Commitment to the Future of Medicare Act, 2004; and

"Whereas competitive bidding for home care services has decreased both the continuity and quality of care available to home care clients; and

"Whereas home care workers do not enjoy the same employment rights, such as successor rights, as all other Ontario workers have, which deprives them of termination rights, seniority rights and the right to move with their work when their employer agency loses a contract; ...

"We call on the government of Ontario:

"(1) to immediately stop the competitive bidding for home care services so home care clients can receive the continuity and quality of care they deserve; and

"(2) to extend successor rights under the Labour Relations Act to home care workers to ensure the home care sector is able to retain a workforce that is responsive to clients' needs."

I fully support this petition, will affix my name to it and give it to page Ida.

### HOSPITAL FUNDING

**Mr. Joe Dickson:** "A petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Central East local health integration network board of directors has approved the Rouge Valley Health System's deficit elimination plan, subject to public meetings; and

"Whereas, despite the significant expansion of the Ajax-Pickering hospital, its largest in its 53-year history, a project that could reach \$100 million, of which 90% is funded by the Ontario government, this plan now calls for the ill-advised transfer of 20 mental health unit beds from Ajax-Pickering hospital to the Centenary health centre in Scarborough; and

"Whereas one of the factors for the successful treatment of patients in the mental health unit is support from family and friends, and the distance to Centenary health centre would negatively impact on the quality of care for residents of Ajax and Pickering; and

"Whereas it is also imperative for Rouge Valley Health System to balance its budget, eliminate its deficit and debt and realize the benefits of additional Ontario government funding;

"We, the undersigned, therefore petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Rouge Valley Health System continue to provide the current level of service to our Ajax-Pickering hospital, which now serves the fastest-growing communities of west Durham, and that the Ajax-Pickering hospital retain the badly needed 20-bed mental health unit."

I affix my signature to that and give it to page Jordynne.

### LORD'S PRAYER

**Mr. Bill Murdoch:** I have a petition given to me by Helen Forster of Wiarton. I know there are a lot of people with petitions. I'll just read the preamble.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the current Liberal government is proposing to eliminate the Lord's Prayer from daily proceedings in the Ontario Legislature; ...

"Therefore we, the undersigned, ask the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to preserve the daily recitation of the Lord's Prayer by the Speaker in the Legislature."

I have affixed my name thereto.

### SCHOOL POOLS

**Mr. Michael Prue:** I have a petition that reads as follows:

"Whereas school pools play an important role in the lives of students by making a recreational and athletic facility available to everyone; and

"Whereas programs in existence funded by the Ministries of Health Promotion and Education will be enhanced if students are more physically fit; and

"Whereas pools were municipally built and financed before the amalgamation process made it virtually impossible to continue operations; and

"Whereas the funding formula needs to be amended to allow for the continued operation of school pools;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislature of Ontario to work with the Toronto District School Board and the city of Toronto to ensure that our pools are not closed."

It is signed by Cori Skuffham and 555 students of Malvern Collegiate. I am in agreement and would affix my signature thereto.

1530

### ANTI-SMOKING LEGISLATION

**Mrs. Laura Albanese:** I have a petition from residents of York South-Weston. It reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas children exposed to second-hand smoke are at a higher risk for respiratory illnesses including asthma,

bronchitis and pneumonia, as well as sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS) and increased incidences of cancer and heart disease in adulthood; and

"Whereas the Ontario Medical Association supports a ban on smoking in vehicles when children are present, as they have concluded that levels of second-hand smoke can be 23 times more concentrated in a vehicle than in a house because circulation is restricted within a small space; and

"Whereas the Ipsos Reid poll conducted on behalf of the Ontario Tobacco-Free Network indicates that eight in 10 (80%) of Ontarians support 'legislation that would ban smoking in cars and other private vehicles where a child or adolescent under 16 years of age is present'; and

"Whereas Nova Scotia, California, Puerto Rico, and South Australia recently joined several jurisdictions of the United States of America in banning smoking in vehicles carrying children;

"We, the undersigned, respectfully petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to amend the Smoke-Free Ontario Act to ban smoking in vehicles carrying children 16 years of age and under."

I agree with this petition and have affixed my signature to it, and I will give it to page Thomas.

#### LORD'S PRAYER

**Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer:** I have here a petition signed by several hundred people from the region of Waterloo.

"Petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Premier Dalton McGuinty has called on the Ontario Legislature to consider removing the Lord's Prayer from its daily proceedings;

"Whereas the Lord's Prayer has been an integral part of our parliamentary heritage that was first established in 1793 under Lieutenant Governor John Graves Simcoe;

"Whereas the Lord's Prayer is today a significant part of the religious heritage of millions of Ontarians of culturally diverse backgrounds;

"Therefore, we, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario to continue its long-standing practice of using the Lord's Prayer as part of its daily proceedings."

I'm pleased to attach my signature.

#### HOME CARE

**Mr. Paul Miller:** I'm proud to present this petition from the Niagara region.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ontario government has continued the practice of competitive bidding for home care services; and

"Whereas the competitive bidding process has increased the privatization of Ontario's health care delivery, in direct violation of the Commitment to the Future of Medicare Act, 2004; and

"Whereas competitive bidding for home care services has decreased both the continuity and quality of care available to home care clients; and

"Whereas home care workers do not enjoy the same employment rights, such as successor rights, as all other Ontario workers have, which deprives them of termination rights, seniority rights and the right to move with their work when their employer agency loses a contract;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"We call on the government of Ontario:

"(1) to immediately stop the competitive bidding for home care services so home care clients can receive the continuity and quality of care they deserve; and

"(2) to extend successor rights under the Labour Relations Act to home care workers to ensure the home care sector is able to retain a workforce that is responsive to clients' needs."

I agree with this petition and I hereby affix my name to it.

#### DISABLED PERSONS PARKING PERMIT PROGRAM

**Mr. Michael A. Brown:** I have a petition signed by hundreds of people from across the province of Ontario.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas there currently exist problems of exposure to theft and the weather when displaying a disabled person parking permit on a motorcycle while parked in a disabled parking space;

"We, the undersigned, petition our members of Parliament to promote the development of a special, fixed permit as proposed by the Bikers Rights Organization, for use by disabled persons who ride or are passengers on motorcycles, even if that requires an amendment to the Highway Traffic Act."

I agree with this petition. I thank the Bikers Rights Organization, and in particular Michael Warren from Iron Bridge.

#### LORD'S PRAYER

**Mr. John O'Toole:** I'm pleased to present a petition on behalf of the community of Bowmanville, and Bowmanville Baptist Church specifically, who have given me a petition that reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the current Liberal government is proposing to eliminate the Lord's Prayer from its rightful place at the beginning of daily proceedings in the Legislature; and

"Whereas the recitation of the Lord's Prayer has opened the Legislature every day since the 19th century; and

"Whereas the Lord's Prayer's message of forgiveness and the avoidance of evil is universal to the human condition: It is a valuable guide and lesson for a chamber that is too often an arena of conflict; and

"Whereas recognizing the diversity of the people of Ontario should be an inclusive process, not one which excludes traditions such as the Lord's Prayer;



"Therefore we, the undersigned, ask the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to preserve the daily recitation of the Lord's Prayer by the Speaker in the Legislature."

I'm pleased to sign this in support of it and give it to Prakash.

#### ROUTE 17

**M. Jean-Marc Lalonde:** I have a petition that comes from residents of Prescott and Russell.

« À l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario :

« Attendu que l'ancien gouvernement de l'Ontario a transféré la responsabilité de la route 17 aux municipalités, la ville d'Ottawa et des comtés unis de Prescott et Russell;...

« Attendu qu'en 2001, l'administration des comtés unis de Prescott et Russell a estimé à 21 000 véhicules par jour la circulation en semaine sur la 17 à l'entrée de la cité Clarence-Rockland et que depuis, ce chiffre a augmenté à 25 000 autos;...

« Attendu que les membres du personnel du MTO régional avaient recommandé et accepté tel que présenté par la commission de révision régionale en date du 27 avril 1992 que la route 17 soit retenue comme une route collectrice provinciale suivant l'achèvement de la route 417;...

« Attendu que la population de l'est de l'Ontario exige les mêmes services de sécurité routière;

« Nous, soussignés, adressons à l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario la pétition suivante :

« Nous demandons au ministère des Transports de l'Ontario de reprendre immédiatement la responsabilité de la route 17/174 et de procéder à son élargissement de la cité Clarence-Rockland à la ville d'Ottawa. »

J'y ajoute ma signature avec fierté.

#### LORD'S PRAYER

**Mr. John Yakabuski:** I have a petition here from Rev. Lloyd Reaney of the Whitewater Wesleyan Community Church and his parishioners.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the current Liberal government is proposing to eliminate the Lord's Prayer from its place at the beginning of daily proceedings in the Legislature; and

"Whereas the recitation of the Lord's Prayer has opened the Legislature every day since the 19th century; and

"Whereas the Lord's Prayer's message is one of forgiveness, of providing for those in need of their 'daily bread' and of preserving us from the evils that we may fall into; it is a valuable guide and lesson for a chamber that is too often an arena for conflict; and

"Whereas recognizing the diversity of the people of Ontario should be an inclusive process, not one which excludes traditions such as the Lord's Prayer;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, ask the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to preserve the daily recitation of the Lord's Prayer by the Speaker in the Legislature."

I support this petition, affix my name to it and send it to the table with Marcus.

#### HOSPITAL FUNDING

**Mr. Joe Dickson:** "Petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Central East local health integration network board of directors has approved the Rouge Valley Health System's deficit elimination plan, subject to public meetings; and

"Whereas it is important to ensure that the new birthing unit at Centenary hospital, a \$20-million expansion that will see 16 new labour, delivery, recovery and postpartum (LDRP) birthing rooms and an additional 21 postpartum rooms added by October 2008, will not cause any decline in the pediatric services currently provided at the Ajax-Pickering hospital; and

"Whereas, with the significant expansion of the Ajax-Pickering hospital, the largest in its 53-year history, a project that could reach \$100 million, of which 90% is funded by the Ontario government, it is important to continue to have a complete maternity unit at the Ajax hospital; and

"Whereas it is also imperative for the Rouge Valley Health System to balance its budget, eliminate its deficit and debt and realize the benefits of additional Ontario government funding; and

"Whereas the parents of Ajax and Pickering deserve the right to have their children born in their own community, where they have chosen to live and work;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Rouge Valley Health System continue to provide the current level of service; and

"That our Ajax-Pickering hospital now serves the fastest-growing communities of west Durham; and

"That the Ajax-Pickering hospital retain its full maternity unit."

I hereby affix my signature and pass this to Marco, our page.

1540

#### OSTOMY SUPPLIES

**Mr. Toby Barrett:** "Ontario Needs to Increase Funding for Ostomy Supplies." That's the title of a petition to the Parliament of Ontario.

"Whereas there are thousands of ostomy patients across Ontario, many of whom are on fixed incomes;

"Whereas the assistive devices program currently funds \$600 annually for ostomy supplies, which in some cases is merely a third of the annual cost;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, request the McGuinty government increase funding to those who must purchase ostomy supplies in order to survive."

Signatures are coming in mostly from Simcoe, Port Dover, St. Williams, Hagersville and Jarvis, and I readily affix my signature to these petitions.

## NOTICE OF DISSATISFACTION

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott):** Before we go to Orders of the Day, I wish to inform the House that, pursuant to standing order 37(a), the member for Parry Sound–Muskoka has given notice of his dissatisfaction with the answer to his question given by the Minister of Small Business and Entrepreneurship concerning assistance for convenience store operators with new regulations. This matter will be debated today at 6 p.m.

Pursuant to standing order 37(a), the member for Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock has given notice of her dissatisfaction with the answer to her question given by the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services concerning the collection of cigarette taxes from the smoke shop located on government-owned property on Argyle Street in Caledonia. This matter will be debated after 6 p.m. today.

## ORDERS OF THE DAY

HIGHWAY TRAFFIC AMENDMENT ACT  
(SPEED-LIMITING SYSTEMS), 2008LOI DE 2008 MODIFIANT  
LE CODE DE LA ROUTE  
(SYSTÈMES LIMITEURS DE VITESSE)

Resuming the debate adjourned on April 14, 2008, on the motion for second reading of Bill 41, An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act in relation to the use of speed-limiting systems in commercial motor vehicles.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott):** Further debate?

**Ms. Laurie Scott:** I'm pleased to join in the debate today on Bill 41, the Highway Traffic Amendment Act, (Speed-limiting Systems), 2008.

*Applause.*

**Ms. Laurie Scott:** Thank you, Minister of Transportation, for that round of applause.

When I responded initially, when the legislation was introduced about a month ago, or a few weeks ago, I made the point that the trucking association and I had had discussions in 2006, and I had brought forward a private member's bill at that time, which was debated in the Legislature and passed. Unfortunately, it had not gone to committee before the Legislature rose for the election of 2007.

It's very nice to see that the government saw the private member's bill, listened to the Ontario Trucking Association and many other supporters of this legislation, and brought it in as government legislation. I'm pleased to have the opportunity to join in the discussion, like we did a couple of years ago. I would say that from the beginning of the debate in the Legislature—I think yesterday was the first lead-off—

**Hon. James J. Bradley:** On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I neglected, when I made my statement on the

bill, to commend the member who is speaking for her initiative with her private member's bill, and I wish to commend her now. It was an oversight on my part. I was not aware of it. I should have been aware of it and was not, and I want to take the opportunity to commend her on that.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott):** That's not technically a point of order, but we appreciate the information from the Minister of Transportation.

I return to the member for Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock, who has the floor.

**Ms. Laurie Scott:** I appreciate the Minister of Transportation's standing and acknowledging that. I know that all members of the Legislature work very hard, and Private Members' Public Business is a time in the Legislature when we get to bring pieces of legislation that we hope the government of the day will adopt. In this situation, it has been a couple of years, but we appreciate the fact that the legislation has been brought forward by the present government. For those watching at home—

**Hon. Jim Watson:** Who?

**Ms. Laurie Scott:** Who? Well, probably my mother. But thank you, Minister.

For those watching at home, this was brought in as speed-limiter legislation. Sometimes I explain that it's like a golf cart: You can only go so fast. There's a chip that has been installed in trucks produced since 1995, I think, but I'm getting ahead of my facts and figures, so I'll catch up. Basically this is being brought in on commercial vehicles.

It's simply a matter of physics. You use less energy when you reduce speed. It certainly reduces greenhouse gas and smog-causing emissions. By slowing trucks down on our highways, we reduce the amount of fuel they burn. What a reduction in fuel consumption means is quite straightforward. I know we've talked a lot about climate change in the Legislature, even today with the environmental industry being here. That is certainly something that will decrease greenhouse gas emissions and help our climate.

There was some opposition on the government side when the private member's bill was introduced a couple of years ago. I know that the member for Huron–Bruce said yesterday that she had seen the light and changed her views on that.

*Interjection.*

**Ms. Laurie Scott:** So yes, Minister of Transportation, you've done a good job of getting everybody onside.

Whatever our differences, I think what matters is that we're starting to take action now rather than later. We're hoping that this will go to committee in a relatively quick fashion because I know that when I introduced it, and I have to be honest, there were certainly some people in the communities who had opposition to it. I think it's only fair that they are able to have that opportunity to come to committee to air their concerns about the legislation. That is part of the democratic process. I hope that the government does that.



I think that the Ontario Trucking Association and the industry are key examples. They came forward with this idea. They're willing partners in the industry. They came forward and said they wanted to partner to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, to reduce consumption of fossil fuel. Using speed limiters to reduce trucking speed is a strategy that is supported both by the trucking industry and by environmental experts. Sometimes that's a hard combination to get together, but they did so in this situation.

I know that our critic for transportation, the member from Oak Ridges–Markham, spoke yesterday—I'm sorry; Newmarket–Aurora is his riding now. He had some concerns, expressed them eloquently, and was hoping that committee will help air the concerns and maybe improve on the legislation before us here. So, I think that it's safe to say, and the minister did in his initial comments, that there's a fairly good consolidation of the Legislature in bringing this forward.

The delay of two years—we can get over that; the trucking industry and the environmental groups coming together, and it's the challenge that we have.

I would say that most of the truckers out there are responsible drivers. Safety is an issue. I know we just saw an accident, I think yesterday, on the 401, where we had some pigs that escaped. And we've had some cattle—for those of us in agricultural ridings and for those in that setting coming to the city, it does clash. All of us have been watching the news. But things happen, and that is what you see on the news.

People are looking for pieces of legislation to help protect them. When they bring in speed limiters, they see more safety is involved in the trucks. You see environmental groups supporting this, that this is good that we're acting in this respect.

The original legislation was supported by a host of other safety organizations, and I'm going to list a few of them here. The Canadian Automobile Association, the Canada Safety Council, the Traffic Injury Research Foundation, the Ontario Safety League, Road Watch, the Transportation Health and Safety Association of Ontario, the Insurance Bureau of Ontario, the Markel and Old Republic Insurance Companies and Smartrisk all came out then, and I'm sure they're still here today, to say that speed limiters for trucks will make our roads safer.

There will always be, as I said, those who were in the Legislature—maybe the Minister of Transportation was—when they brought in the seatbelt legislation, and when there were mandatory helmets for motorcycles. Certainly, we saw some pushback on those issues at that time when they were introduced. I'm sure we'll have a little pushback on this, but the main thing is that we're acting appropriately and enacting sensible legislation. Substantive input has been done and is going to be further searched out.

The amount of emissions—and I'm just looking for my figures here—that is going to be reduced certainly is something that we cannot forget, the elimination of 140 kilotonnes of greenhouse gas emissions per year. That's a

step forward, and a step forward that we need to do as a province.

1550

There is some discussion among the trucking companies about competitiveness, but when I see that the Ontario Trucking Association and the American Trucking Association have been supporting bills in this manner—I think we've seen the province of Quebec also do that—when the industry itself is saying that we're all on the same playing field, then it should not be an issue. There are concerns out there about that, but I think with the industry behind this legislation, that certainly can be overcome.

We talk about fuel savings. We've all been up to the gas station recently. The price of fuel just keeps going up, and we wonder, "Will it ever stop?" They're telling us it may not stop any time soon. The fuel-savings prediction of up to 10,500 litres of diesel fuel per truck per year—an annual savings of probably \$8,400 per truck per year—is a huge amount of savings. So I say to the truckers out there who may have a few problems, I think you have to look at the savings in the cost of fuel that you're going to incur and say, "There's the time factor," but 105 kilometres per hour—which isn't quite in the legislation, but I'm sure will be coming in the regulations—is what has been recommended, and that has been arrived at with much discussion and much consultation.

So the mandating of a speed of no more than 105 kilometres will certainly be a safety factor and a fuel-saving factor, and of course the connection with the environment that I mentioned before.

I mentioned speed coinciding with crashes. We've mentioned a few recent crashes that we've had. There's no question that we live in a time where we've got the technology. I think most of the trucks since 1995, if I can remember correctly, have had these chips placed in them, so it's just a matter of activating them. Fifty per cent of trucks operating in Ontario and 74% in the United States are already governed without harming their ability to service their customers. So this has already been proven and just needs to be enforced for the rest of the percentages in Ontario and the United States.

Truckers are used to coming back and forth through different jurisdictions, with different rules and regulations. They've certainly done that with different parts—axle weights etc.—and they've been able to accommodate. I know there were some issues in respect to that which I think we can deal with. As I say, the industry is out there to help those truckers who do have some concerns.

When we talk about the safety issue—and I know that in the last few weeks we've been speaking about illegal smoking and second-hand smoke effects, banning it in cars. We've been talking in the Legislature and asking questions of the Minister of Health Promotion with respect to illegal smoke shops that we know of and the dangers to young children who are close to these smoke shops and who are buying these hazardous, untested



products. That is a health issue too. We've just announced that we're going to have a late show on that, so I know that the member from Parry Sound-Muskoka and I will be addressing that in a little bit deeper involvement. We're all looking at safety issues, and the illegal sale of tobacco on government-owned property is something that you just can't ignore any longer. I know that we're going to be speaking about that later on.

The critic for transportation brought up some good points yesterday when he was talking about enforcement. I know that he speaks a lot with enforcers. I know that the member for Simcoe North, our critic Garfield Dunlop, has done great work with our Ontario Provincial Police in his capacity as critic for community safety and correctional services.

There's no question that resources have to be placed into enforcement. I think that that cannot go without some time spent on it today. We can bring in laws, but if we don't give the tools to the enforcers, what good is it going to do? So we have to look at the resources that are adequate enough for the speed limiters and educate the police on how to check to make sure speed limiters are activated and check that appropriate speed limits are being met. I think that the member for Newmarket-Aurora made some good points yesterday in respect to enforcement and education. I don't want that part to go unnoticed.

Legislation is brought in, as in Bill 41. You can see, for the people at home, that it's not very many pages. Lots of details are in regulations, which is the same with many bills. It's in those regulations that we get down to the nitty-gritty, the details. I'm sure that will be done in a good and open fashion. As I mentioned, I don't believe that "105 kilometres" is stated within the bill. That would be brought up in the regulation, and feedback would be gotten in that matter.

On some of the quotes from the time, the Canada Safety Council—I want to read a quote from them in respect to the speed limiters at 105 kilometres per hour: "We are convinced that mandating speed limiters, especially at this time, will be most successful—the end result being a reduction in the number of road collisions ... with an accompanying reduction in greenhouse gases."

Pollution Probe "strongly endorses the adoption, compliance and enforcement of this policy, which will have positive health benefits for the population of Ontario," reinforced by Dr. Chiotti, air program director and senior scientist at Pollution Probe.

I mentioned that the CAA had worked very closely with the Ontario Trucking Association; many letters of support, speaking not only on encouraging safe driving among members and congratulating the Ontario Trucking Association on this initiative, but also in relation to climate change, which "is one of the Canadian Automobile Association's"—the CAA's—"four national priorities." They're saying, "In studying" this speed limiters bill, "we support your initiative because it would result in reduced emissions from trucks. Our conclusions are supported by research commissioned by the United States

Environmental Protection Agency, who found that truck fuel economy drops significantly as their speed rises above 55 mph."

The Canada Safety Council is "a strong advocate and supporter of truck industry safety initiatives." As I mentioned several times before, when you see an industry bring forward changes they'd like to see—and I've worked with environmental groups—that's usually a good sign that they've done the research; they see the support out there. It's up to us to bring in legislation and to educate.

The Canada Safety Council "strongly encourage the Ontario Trucking Association and its members to proceed with the campaign to promote and mandate speed limiters on trucks. We are convinced that mandating speed limiters, especially at this time, will be most successful—the end result being a reduction in the number of road collisions across Ontario with an accompanying reduction in greenhouse gases, another public health and safety concern."

Just a few examples. I think I mentioned them a couple of years ago. I'm quite sure I did when we introduced legislation. Those views haven't changed. The issues are still out there. I know that the former Minister of Transportation, Ms. Cansfield, was in constant dialogue with the Ontario Trucking Association also. She has moved on to the new ministry. The minister mentioned that he hadn't realized the private member's bill was before, but that research was obviously passed on from staff to staff as the ministers changed and elections came and went.

1600

We appreciate the fact that this legislation has been brought forward. It's going to go to committee to flush out some things, as we always have to take a double look to make sure we've got things right, not just in technical wording but maybe in some other things that we just can't think of as legislators.

*Interjection.*

**Ms. Laurie Scott:** Of course. But we have to have our own here.

I know the committee will do a good job. I'm looking forward to the fact that it will go to committee, and I'm hoping that within this session we'll have some good dialogue.

I have a few names of people who want to come forward to give their advice and considerations. They're front-line truckers and they have some good input. I drive a lot in my riding of Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock. It's just shy of 10,000 square kilometres, and certainly it's a few hundred kilometres from Toronto to different parts of the riding. I'm on the roads quite a bit but they're on the roads day and night, and they put in long hours, and they have books to fill out and checks and balances and safety concerns and traffic jams and weather to deal with. They're on the front lines, and they should be involved in giving the input. I know some of them don't belong to the Ontario Trucking Association—and I mentioned them several times, that they were the leaders in



bringing this legislation and this input forward—and they should have their air time also.

I appreciate the time that I've been able to take this afternoon to debate the speed limiters bill. I look forward to questions and comments from all sides of the House. I don't think it's one that's going to be hotly debated in the Legislature for once.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott):** Questions and comments?

**Ms. Andrea Horwath:** It's certainly my pleasure to make a few comments on the speech that the member just gave. I have to say that she has done an excellent job, and she has done an excellent job because she is very intimately knowledgeable about the issues involved with this bill because she has done some work on a similar piece of legislation herself, which I believe was brought in as a private member's bill in the last term.

In remarking on that, I think it's also appropriate to mention how pleased I was to hear the Minister of Transportation so graciously acknowledge the work of the member. That sometimes doesn't go on around here. But we always know that the Minister of Transportation is a person who respects the hard work that members do in this chamber, and I think his acknowledgment speaks well to his character as well.

On the bill itself, I think the member raised a number of issues, and I think that those issues are ones that the government would do well to heed. There are some that I agree with very much, and I expect that my colleague from Beaches–East York and I will be raising them ourselves as we have the opportunity to debate this bill this afternoon as well. But the most important piece that was brought to the discussion was the issue of ensuring that this bill has some time in committee, because certainly there are implications. There are particularly implications for people who earn their bread and butter, if you will, through the trucking industry, and I think that includes both truckers and the companies they work for, and perhaps those two entities are affected differently by this legislation. Nonetheless, I think that there's an important principle in having bills go to committee so that those stakeholders who are directly affected have an opportunity to have a voice. That is what was being suggested and that's something that I also support.

I look forward to bringing some more specifics around my concerns on this bill a little later on.

**Mr. Dave Levac:** Let me begin by indicating that I support the legislation and that I thank the Minister of Transportation and, as pointed out by my colleagues opposite, respect the fact that the minister has always been level-headed about how he introduces legislation.

Indeed, if you check the record, you'll find out that as government, we've sent these types of bills to committee on a regular, ongoing basis. There have been very few bills on this side that have not gone to committee, sometimes even at the request of the opposition, because they found that it was not quite as easy as everyone thought it might be and requested that it get sent to committee, and it did indeed do that.

The member from Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock—and I know that's a different name than it used to be, but that's just the nature of this beast—had indicated some of the good points that were mentioned.

I want to mention a couple of important points myself: first of all, my relationship with the president of the Ontario Trucking Association, Dave Bradley, whom I've worked with in the past, even when I was in opposition back in 1999. He indicated a desire to move trucking forward.

I have to start by paying a compliment to the truckers of Ontario. I have found no people on the road who know how to drive better than the truckers. There's an awful lot of criticism out there that they are the ones who are causing—we did research behind that, and there is a lot of research to indicate that they are the safest people on the highways this side of our OPP officers. So I want to congratulate the truckers and thank them for the good work that they do.

We do know that introducing speed-limiter legislation is their request. There will be a committee. There will be some people who are not necessarily in favour of that: independents. Some of the individuals who are affected directly as an independent or just as a single trucker will want to come to this committee and give their rationale. We welcome that and we'll invite it.

I would also say that studies show that casualties would be reduced by 7% for every one-kilometre reduction in the average vehicle speed. That means everything to me.

**Mr. Robert Bailey:** I would like to commend the member from Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock for her remarks—very erudite and to the point.

I would like to support this bill as well, with the changes that we'll probably see in committee in the amendments. I did some research with some individuals, and one of the big things I see with this is cutting down collisions on our 400 highways. Road safety is reason enough to support this. Over 50% of the trucks operating in Ontario today, and 74% in the United States, are already governed and it doesn't seem to harm service to their customers. The 105 kilometres that we're looking at is not excessive. So I can see that that would be alright too.

I think on the question of fuel economy and conservation, another issue right now is that operators are working at close margins, so this should also be a bill for them and their bottom line when they are doing their calculations for their contracts.

**Trip times:** It seems that the trip times are marginal. Some people have calculated that the difference in arrival time from Toronto to Windsor is 10 minutes; Toronto to Montreal, 15 minutes; Toronto to Halifax, 45 minutes. So all of those are things that we can work with.

**Fuel savings—**to touch on that—of up to 10,500 litres a year per truck in diesel would work out to an annual savings of approximately \$8,400 per truck; an elimination of greenhouse gases, according to the calculations, of 140 kilotonnes of GHG emissions per year; and



also, I go back to the reduced risk of severe crashes. So for all those reasons, I also would support this bill.

**Mr. Michael Prue:** It is indeed a privilege and an honour to stand and discuss the debate by the member from Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock. It takes me back to that day in the Legislature a couple of years ago when I was hearing the private member's bill. I remember at the end of the private member's bill, after hearing what she had to say and looking at the copious amount of information that she had sent to each and every member of the Legislature, as it then was, she sent me a package that I think is unparalleled in the entire history of private members' bills. Not only was it an explanation of what was contained within the body of her bill; there was scientific and environmental information, there was information from truckers associations, there was information from police and law enforcement agencies. There was information from literally everyone who would have a say in it. Having read the information, that was probably more than I have ever had before or since on any single private member's bill.

I know, from that, that she was extremely passionate in getting this particular measure passed by the House. It did not happen in the last Legislature. It died on the order paper, as I believe virtually every private member's bill did. But I have to commend the government for bringing forward a good idea. Although you would not adopt it during the last session, the government has the good grace, the good sense, through this transportation minister, to recognize a good idea and to bring it back.

We all believe that what is contained within the four walls of this bill is appropriate. I don't know how much debate time is going to be spent, with all parties agreeing. I have not yet had an opportunity to hear anyone who spoke against the provisions of the bill. All that everyone is saying at this point is that the bill needs to be studied. It needs to go to committee. We need to hear from all groups involved. We need to understand that what is contained in the bill will last the test of any court appearances. And with that, I commend the speaker.

1610

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott):** That concludes the time for questions and comments, and the member for Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock has two minutes to reply.

**Ms. Laurie Scott:** I would like to thank the members who did questions and answers: the member from Hamilton Centre, the member from Brant, the member from Sarnia-Lambton, and the member from Beaches-East York, who has a very good memory. He remembered from a couple of years ago how many pieces of paper came with the background on the bill. I appreciate your acknowledgment of that and all the hard work of the associations and the staff in my office in compiling that.

We made the points a few times that the commercial trucks that have been built within the last 10 years have already had this electronic device that has been put in and that the technology has been there for quite a while, the preparatory work. It's now just a matter of the legislation,

working with the industry, and working with the enforcement of how we are going to do that.

We have certainly brought up the safety issues, and the environmental aspects of this bill. When I introduced the bill and commented on the private member's bill—I got some phone calls and a little bit of pushback, not just some of the members. It didn't go through with unanimous voting from the last Legislature. We had a few people who did not vote for it. But I think we've got more information out there now. Some of them have changed their minds. We now need to talk to the remaining independent truckers or other organizations that want comment on this bill. That's why we have the committee process, and we'll look forward to the fact that that will go to the committee process.

The member from Brant certainly brought up the safety issues and the numbers there. Absolutely, there are statistics out there on that factor alone. The new member from Sarnia-Lambton has done a great job in the Legislature, and we're thrilled that he is over here on our side speaking and doing such a good job. And the Minister of Transportation for the acknowledgment of the work done before.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott):** Further debate?

**Ms. Andrea Horwath:** It's certainly my pleasure to make a few remarks this afternoon on Bill 41.

I don't think I'm as optimistic as the member from Kawartha Lakes-Haliburton-Brock. I don't think there are probably that many people watching today, but if there are, that's great and welcome and thank you for tuning in to the legislative channel. Of course, if they all knew who was sitting in this House this afternoon, everybody would be tuning in for this titillating debate on Bill 41.

I have to say that our caucus has reviewed this legislation, and as mentioned by my friend from Beaches-East York in his response to the previous member's debate, it is likely that we will be seeing our way to supporting this legislation.

However, we also agree and believe that there do need to be some public hearings. Again, it's something that we fundamentally believe in: the opportunity for people who will be affected by any legislation that goes through this place to have a voice, to raise issues, and hopefully—I guess “theoretically” really is the better way to put it—affect the legislation itself. I say “hopefully” and “theoretically” because oftentimes many good proposed amendments come forward during committee process, and unfortunately, most often the government doesn't see fit to accept amendments of the opposition.

However it is a new day, it is a new session, it is a new term of government, and perhaps that is one thing that we will see change over these next couple of years: that the government will see fit, in the spirit of the kind of thing that the Minister of Transportation did, which was to bring forward a bill the idea of which came from an opposition member. Perhaps in the spirit of that kind of acknowledgment that members on all sides of this House



have valuable information, and have valuable pieces to contribute to the drafting of legislation, we will see more of an opportunity for the government members to be truly thinking about and providing an opportunity for a real debate and discussion in committee whereby, at the end of the day, some of the amendments that are put forward are considered more as a real opportunity for positive change, as opposed to just a pro forma requirement of getting through the committee process, which unfortunately is what we've seen all too often over the last couple of years.

The bill essentially requires, through amendments to the Highway Traffic Act, that commercial motor vehicles be fitted with speed-control devices that mechanically prevent a truck from exceeding a particular speed limit. The bill itself does not set out what that speed limit is, but the minister has been very clear that through regulation, I guess, they will set that speed limit at 105 kilometres per hour. Although there is no indication that that is actually part of the bill, certainly that's the expectation that has been set by the government, and I wouldn't expect them to deviate from that, considering that that's what they're claiming in all their written materials in regard to this particular piece of legislation.

The other thing the bill does is prevent tampering with said device. Basically, it says that those devices not only need to be in place, but that they cannot be tampered with, and also that if a truck is pulled over for speeding and the 105-kilometre-per-hour limit is actually exceeded, then the expectation will be that there has been a violation of the system that's been put in place by the legislation. As a result, the police would of course be given authority to search the truck and seize any tampered-with device that limits speed on that truck.

This is certainly something that has been discussed previously in this Legislature, and I think that all parties generally see it as valuable. There are, of course, a couple of issues that come to mind in regard to how to make it work effectively. Those issues range from inter-jurisdictional issues—for example, if a truck is crossing the border from the United States, which has different speed limits than are in effect in Ontario, what happens? What's the situation with those trucks? Do they still have to be at the same speed limit, even though they're not required to have a device? Are they required to have a device, regardless of the fact that their company of origin is in a different jurisdiction? There are many pieces to be ironed out in that regard. Even interprovincially within Canada there are similar issues and concerns that arise.

So we urge this government to enter into dialogue with the federal government to ensure that at least in areas where we have some common jurisdiction with other transportation-type companies or providers—for example, the Canadian transportation system—the Canadian government, as well as the provincial governments, particularly those that surround us, are likewise engaged in this discussion and have similar legislation in place, which eases our ability to implement this new system and doesn't create all kinds of problems and barriers to the

moving of goods. That would be the one issue that I think is important: that we actually deal with federal and provincial counterparts to ensure we don't have negative impacts on trade as a result of this legislation.

There are other issues that came up in the discussion of this bill in its previous form by the member for Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock. I was speaking to someone just today about possible ways of getting around this particular law that don't involve tampering with the device. I was actually interested to hear that there are safety concerns being raised by people within the industry who are concerned, for example, that if a truck is cruising along on a gradual incline and they reach a peak or precipice and begin a decline or downhill, they can easily put their transmission in neutral and cruise on the downgrade and the speed will go up far above 105 kilometres an hour, but it won't affect the device because the engine won't be engaged because they'll be in neutral. If, on that downgrade, there is something that would require the truck to brake or to reduce speed quickly, it becomes problematic. It becomes a safety issue because of course they cannot then use their engine brakes to be able to reduce their speed in a quick, reactive way, because they're in neutral.

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It will take some time to make that adjustment. This causes some concern about safety, particularly if these truckers are trying to either gain speed or further reduce fuel consumption by cruising down a downgrade and disengaging their engines by putting them in neutral. So there's one thing that needs to be considered in terms of the possible outcome or the unintended consequences or the potential for unintended safety consequences. I'm sure these kinds of details and these kinds of specifics will be much more fulsomely explored at the committee level. That's just one example that was shared with me today, as something that might need to be considered in terms of this legislation.

Another issue came up where someone was describing to me the possibility of, for example, a truck or several trucks, along with cars, driving along a highway, and the highway is for all intents and purposes a two-lane highway but then it expands to an extra lane for passing. There is perhaps one truck that's not quite doing the 105, maybe doing 95, and there's a truck behind that truck that's going a little slower; that truck decides it's passing-lane time, so let's pull out into the passing lane and pass that truck. The maximum speed that that passing truck can attain is 105, so the length of time to actually pass the slower truck would be considerable, because the amount of speed that you can gain is very small compared to the vehicle that you're trying to pass.

Again, a potential unintended consequence of such a situation, if played out to the end—if there is a considerable amount of traffic on the road, for example, if there are a number of vehicles that have been anticipating that passing lane coming up because there are lots of trucks on the road and perhaps there are cars or other trucks that want to get through on that passing lane, and the entire



distance of the passing lane is taken up by the two vehicles that I just described in this scenario, then there's a possibility of frustration growing. There's a possibility of road rage ensuing or other kinds of stresses or frustrations of other vehicles.

I, unfortunately, have to drive the highways often, as many of the members of this House do, and my route is from Hamilton, along the QEW to this wonderful place. I have to tell you, there are times when one just shakes one's head at the kinds of behaviours that are demonstrated on the road. I really don't believe people have a good understanding of their obligations and responsibilities as drivers sometimes. I wouldn't say people generally, but there are often people—you just watch what they're doing on the road and you think, "Wow, I can't believe that guy did that thing."

Usually I'm not that polite. Usually I don't say, "Wow, I can't believe that guy did that thing." I'm not going to tell you what I say, but I can tell you it's not usually that polite. But it is true.

The number of times I have seen cars cut off trucks blows me out of the water, cars that cut off trucks not realizing how long it takes or how difficult it is for a truck to gear down or to slow down without jack-knifing. It really and truly is frightening. It's a frustrating thing because you realize, as you spend more time on the highways, that if there was more common courtesy and if there was a greater level of understanding of the challenges and the particularities of various kinds of vehicles that you are "sharing the road with," then we would probably see a lot less accidents happening in the province of Ontario.

It reminds me of a sad story. When I was a young woman, I was finishing high school and I had the opportunity to take driving lessons. I have three siblings, so there were four of us in the family. My dad had to make sure that we all took driving lessons because we would all be driving his car. We couldn't afford four cars. So we all dutifully took our driving lessons.

I can recall that one of the things my driving instructor was always very concerned about was merging on and off highways. Interestingly enough, I lived in Stoney Creek at the time, so the QEW and that whole area were not too far from where I lived and where I took my driving lessons. He had always told me that one of the most important things to do is to merge properly, whether you're merging off a ramp or onto a ramp, or whether you're in traffic approaching a merge, how you have to be aware of the cars that are trying to get onto the highway and how important it is to be very aware and very courteous, particularly as you are approaching an area where there's an on-ramp on a highway. The unfortunate thing is that I learned a couple of years later that my driving instructor, who taught me those very valuable and important lessons about road safety, was killed in an accident merging onto a highway, an accident with a truck.

It really reinforced with me that no matter how aware you are of the road or how safe you are or how in tune

you are with what your obligations are as a safe driver, it can always be somebody else who can threaten your safety. You really do rely on others who are sharing the road with you and their capacity to understand what their actions will do. When I speak to the issue of people cutting off trucks, I can tell you that that's probably one of the most dangerous situations on the road.

We know that, unfortunately, trucks are abundant on our highways. I say unfortunately because I really do believe that there are other modes of transportation for moving goods and people that we need to focus on in Ontario. I don't think we're there yet.

I know some of the information that the Ministry of Transportation has provided in the context of this bill speaks to the fuel savings in this kind of initiative, so perhaps it's an environmental type of initiative as well as a safety one, and in fact part of a climate change initiative. I've got to tell you, although I support that completely in terms of the theory, there are many more activities that can happen in transportation and otherwise by this government to deal with real climate change policies.

Members here might recall that recently the marine port people were here for a reception and they donated a fabulous ship that sits in one of our hallways now, a beautiful encased model of a sea-going vessel. One of their messages was that bringing more goods onto the waterways is certainly a much greener way to move goods. So I would hope that when we're talking about things like saving fuel with these speed-limiting devices on trucks, we're also looking at other ways of getting goods off the highways and onto more green ways of transportation. I think also about people and the moving of people through mass transit. Again, that's something that needs significant investment.

But you know what? There are so many other things. In fact, just today, during ministerial statements and responses, my colleague from Toronto—Danforth was very critical of this government's lack of attention to a real climate change plan. He has said over and over again in this House that there is no climate change plan, that this government has no climate change plan. He brought a number of examples of other jurisdictions exceeding us by leaps and bounds. In fact, some of our own home-grown companies are moving to other jurisdictions like Germany, where they can get the supports and the investment to continue to develop new technologies. I think he was specifically talking about Germany, and I think the technology he was talking about was the batteries, the ability to store generated power in battery cells. Many other jurisdictions are so far ahead of us in terms of their building of plants that manufacture windmills for wind power, and we are not anywhere near where we need to be in terms of our investment in these kinds of climate change initiatives.

Just in conservation alone, if this government would put its attention, or its money, I guess, its investment, in more conservation programs—for example, one that just jumps out at me immediately is the ability to invest in or



the need to invest in conservation programs for public buildings. Start with public housing; start with government buildings. Find ways to make those places more energy-efficient. Change the windows; green the roofs. Right? Change the heating systems. Some of them are still hydroelectric heating systems in some of those big, old public housing facilities particularly.

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These are all really tangible things that can be done by this government if it puts its attention to climate change policies that deal with conservation as opposed to policies where they put billions and billions and hundreds of billions of dollars into just creating more energy through their nuclear strategy, which we think is the opposite way to where they should be going. We don't think it's a matter of continuing to encourage people to just consume, consume, consume more energy, so let's build more nukes and then the sky's the limit in terms of the amount of energy available for people to consume. We think it needs to be the opposite.

We think that if the government can put forward Bill 41, An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act in relation to the use of speed-limiting systems in commercial motor vehicles, then certainly this government can take a portion of the gajillions of dollars they're spending on nukes and, instead, put that into real conservation programs, into real R&D, into really supporting green industries and fostering that kind of research and development here in the province of Ontario. That's certainly where we think there needs to be some investment.

There's an issue that came forward and that our critic has mentioned in regard to the province of Quebec, the integration of their speed-limiter legislation and the fact that they actually took this initiative as part of a greater climate change plan, as part of a bigger vision, as part of a larger package. We certainly rue the fact that this government did not decide to do it that way—again, not being too overly critical, because we all in this House, I think, acknowledge that the safety factors are extremely important and that the corollary savings of fuel and those impacts are certainly something that are going in the right direction. But in terms of a real initiative for climate change, this certainly doesn't cut it, nor do pretty much any of the other things that the government—and my friend here from London—Fanshawe, who was heckling me a second ago, would know. Even though he's kind of indicating that we have all these programs, I think he would admit that those programs don't exist and they need to exist.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott):** Questions and comments?

**Mr. Wayne Arthurs:** I'm pleased to take a short amount of time in the questions and comments with respect to the speech by the member from Hamilton Centre.

Let me say that I'm particularly pleased that both the third party and the official opposition—both opposition parties—are generally expressing support for the bill. I'm making an assumption that that carries beyond the indi-

vidual speakers who have been up so far and more broadly reflects their position, which should make this process that much easier.

If I could as well, on behalf of my seatmate, who was here and spoke a little bit earlier, and I know he'll be back in momentarily, just recognize Doug Switzer, who is the manager of government relations for the Ontario Trucking Association, with whom he's worked closely over the years, along with David Bradley, the president. He wanted to acknowledge the good work being done by the association, particularly those in those types of roles, those who work with government, as well as the president in his capacity.

Clearly, the legislation sets out a strategy for a higher degree of safety on the roads both for truckers and for the general travelling public as well. If there's any one good reason to have a variety of restrictive measures, whether it be seat belts or speed limiters on trucking, it's to provide a much higher level of safety than we might otherwise be exposed to.

As people have said, the vast majority of truckers, the vast majority of the time, are law-abiding drivers, recognizing the loads they have on behind them, but there are occasions when you or I have been on the highway and a trucker rolls by doing his 125 or 130 on a 400-series highway, and it can be a little spooky as he goes by and your car is being sucked in and then released. So if this happens, this will reduce the number of those incidents, and it will make me feel that much more comfortable.

I hope that the member from Beaches—East York was right in his earlier two-minute comments that the debate will not be protracted, so we can actually get to committee.

**Mr. Randy Hillier:** There are a few comments that I have on this bill. Of course, it's a well-intended bill, like most other bills that come before the House, but there are a couple of things that I think we have to view and reflect upon.

The first one is this restricting or taking away control and judgment of the drivers and placing it in the hands of technology. That is an important consideration that we have to think of. Do we really want to take away that driver's judgment and ability to control his rig? I prefer putting my faith in the good faith and judgment of trained drivers rather than just technology.

But we also have some other things that I'd like the House to consider. These speed limiters have been available for quite a period of time. They have also, we've heard, been installed on quite a number of highway tractors. What statistics do we have? What data do we have? Have the limiters that have been installed reduced accidents for the ones that they've been installed on, or—

**Mr. Lou Rinaldi:** Speed kills.

**Mr. Randy Hillier:** Well, there are many things that kill, not just speed. But let's look at the evidence. Do we have the statistics? How many accidents have there been in the last year with highway tractors, and how many of those highway tractors had speed limiters and how many



did not? I think it's something that this House should consider and look at.

My last point is, we've heard from the OTA, but we have not heard from the independent owner-operators. They are an important part of our economy and we should give them due consideration.

**Mr. Michael Prue:** To comment on my friend and colleague from Hamilton Centre, she spoke quite eloquently and I think she put forward pretty much the position that most of our caucus will be giving over the debate.

She has said quite clearly that this bill needs to go to committee. We need to hear from some of those who oppose and some of those who have other ideas. We need to hear from the truckers. We need to hear from the trucking association. We need to hear from safety experts. We probably need to hear from lawyers and others in order to come to a firm rationale and to craft a bill that will work for all Ontarians.

She did, quite correctly, point out some of the hazards that are on the road. It was one of my difficulties, as a young driver, trying to figure out how everyone was going to merge when lanes went from four down to two in rapid succession. I can think of the 400 leading north out of Toronto as one of those where you had to keep getting over and over and cars were jockeying for position, and the speeds that were taking place. But she brought up something that I think not many people would recognize, and that is the ability of some truckers, when they get to a crest of a hill, to throw the truck into neutral in order to save gas, especially heading down long, winding hills, and the safety involved in that particular manoeuvre. We need to do everything necessary, as she has stated, to ensure that when speed limiters are put on, they are respected. We need to do everything we can within the body of the bill to make sure that when speed limiters are put on, they are not removed or tampered with in any way. We have to make sure that the legislation is strong enough to make sure the bill survives intact.

For that, I commend her for what she had to say and for teaching me a little bit about going down those hills out of gear.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott):** There is time for one last question and comment.

**Mrs. Linda Jeffrey:** I'm pleased to join the second reading debate on Bill 41 on speed limiters.

This weekend, I had an interesting experience. I had a young man come in to an open house on Sunday afternoon. He was very interested in recycling and composting. His last question was, "What are you doing for the environment?" I thought about what I was doing personally and spoke about it. But certainly this bill comes to mind as to what we're doing for the environment, and there are benefits to this proposed legislation that I did speak to him about, and he was interested.

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Greenhouse gases are something that a lot of young people are talking about in schools. I wasn't aware of the numbers at the time, but it's 280,000 tonnes of green-

house gases that we're taking out of the environment, and that's equivalent to 2,700 tractor-trailers off the road each year. That's a pretty big number; it's a place to start. We expect that it's going to help us achieve a 2% reduction in our greenhouse gas emissions by 2014.

I think we all know that young people in our schools are watching us, and they're asking us to provide some leadership on these issues. It's a place to start. Certainly, the trucking industry is a group of people that we need to consult with as our stakeholders. We need to talk to people who are working their business by going across the border at Windsor. Those are the individuals who are making a living at this industry, and they're the best people to ask those questions of. But we need to consider the people who are going to inherit the world that we're creating right now.

This is part of what we're doing for the environment, so I feel pretty good about this legislation. I'm optimistic about it. The member from Hamilton Centre tried to provide some constructive suggestions. I look forward to hearing what the stakeholders have to say about it.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott):** I'll return to the member for Hamilton Centre, who has two minutes to reply.

**Ms. Andrea Horwath:** I appreciate the remarks by the member for Pickering-Scarborough East, the member for Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington, the member for Beaches-East York and the member for Brampton-Springdale.

I have to say that this has been a good discussion so far. I think that every member participating in the debate has been bringing valuable pieces to the table. I think that once again reinforces the necessity for the public hearings process when this bill goes to committee. When we have bills like this, most members or all sides of the House see fit to seeing the value of them in terms of the necessity that they move forward. I think that it is then incumbent upon us to bring forward those constructive criticisms, as the member from Brampton-Springdale described them, and not only from ourselves, but by inviting in the public and having that dialogue with them.

I know that one of the members, I believe it was the member for Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington, was particularly concerned about the small operators, the owner-operators who are not necessarily affiliated with the larger companies. He thinks that those people need to be engaged as well. I know that the member who had previously brought this bill forward had also raised the fact that she had heard last term, when she brought this forward, some concerns coming from that sector as well.

These kinds of criticisms or these pieces of input are not to be feared. In fact, they're to be welcomed because there are often innuendos that people who are not in the industry bring; those who are in the industry can bring valuable insights into these bills and create bills that are excellent and meet all of the goals of all of us in this place.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott):** Further debate?



**Mr. Khalil Ramal:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for giving me the chance to stand again and speak in support of Bill 41, to put speed limiters on the trucks that drive on the highways across the province of Ontario.

I got the chance to speak to this a bit yesterday. Today, I've been given the chance to speak more and to show my support for this bill. I think it's a very important piece of legislation coming before us. I listened to many people debating this bill who spoke in support of this bill. It's refreshing to see both sides of the House, whether from the government side or the Conservative or NDP side, supporting this initiative, because it's very important for all of us. As I said yesterday, Mr. Speaker, you and I and many others drive on a regular basis on the 401, the 400 or other highways in the province of Ontario. Most of the time we see all the trucks driving on the highways.

As you know, this industry is very important for our economy in this province. I learned not long ago that this industry brings almost \$200 billion on a yearly basis to our economy in the province of Ontario. Alone, this industry contributes more than \$200 billion to our economy. So it's our responsibility to protect this industry and to see how we can create a safety mechanism to protect the drivers and all the people who drive on Highway 401 or other highways, as I mentioned.

In my old capacity, I used to have a distribution company. I used to have two tractor-trailers and eight trucks that drove in southwestern Ontario to deliver goods to many different locations across the province. My message to the drivers was, "Be careful not to speed," not just to protect themselves or my trucks, but to protect the other people who drive on the highways, especially with small cars. As you know, tractor-trailers are huge. As my colleague from Hamilton Centre mentioned, when people try to cut off those trucks, especially small cars, they don't realize that those huge trailers carry probably 11 or 12 tonnes sometimes. They cannot stop easily. Therefore, they have to be careful.

Not long ago, probably about three to four years ago, I was going to my house in London. It was a Thursday afternoon and I had finished my duty. I packed my stuff and went to London. It was a beautiful, sunny day. On my way to London, there were two trailers speeding and trying to race each other on Highway 401. One of them just braked and couldn't stop. What happened was that it moved toward my car, hit the rear of my car and bounced against the median. My car bounced back to the trailer and it dragged me almost 500 metres to 600 metres. I almost got killed because some people did not pay attention. After the accident, I went to see if my car was destroyed and the truck driver told me that some small car had cut him off and he couldn't stop. As I mentioned, when you carry 15 or 20 tonnes sometimes, you cannot stop easily. Also, when you brake, the weight of the truck will give you an extra push, extra speed, probably double the speed limit.

That's why I think it's important for our government and for us in this place to bring legislation and regu-

lations to protect the people in this province. I think these are good initiatives, especially when you learn the importance of this initiative and that you are going to save millions in fuel spread around the province of Ontario. When you speed, not all the oil will be burned but some will be released on the highway. Can you imagine, if every truck drives strictly according to the limit being put by this province, by this legislation, we'll be saving almost \$7,000 to \$8,000 for every truck on a yearly basis. It's a good saving for the operators and also a good saving for the environment and for our economy. It also protects other drivers on the highway, wherever we go in the province of Ontario.

As I mentioned, it's a very important piece of legislation and I hope all the members of this House support it. As I heard from many sides of the House, they are going to support it.

I was listening a few minutes ago to the member from Hamilton Centre, who said, "I know this legislation has an aim to also save the climate and protect our environment," but she doesn't see a plan put by our government to protect our environment.

Last Saturday, my colleague the Attorney General and I had a big event in the city of London, at White Oaks Mall—you know, this program we call Think Globally, Act Locally. We invited about 40 vendors concerned about the environment. They came to the mall, put up booths and talked to thousands and thousands of walkers who walk in the mall on a daily basis. Some of them talked about retrofitting their homes to protect them. They also convinced them to change their windows and their doors. As you know, there is a government program—provincial and federal—to support any person, any household that wants to change their windows or doors to save energy. Also, we gave away more than 2,000 of those efficiency light bulbs. The people commended our efforts. Besides that, we gave away more than 300 to 400 trees, to create some kind of movement, to convince the people to participate and protect our environment by changing light bulbs, by changing their doors and windows, making sure we have efficient homes, and also being a member of the community who works hard to protect our environment.

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I think this bill achieves many different goals—first, to protect the environment, because we eliminate the waste, especially when we speed, and also to create some kind of safety mechanism for the people who are driving the trucks, and also to the people driving on the highway.

**Mr. Mike Colle:** Especially on the highway near London, right?

**Mr. Khalil Ramal:** Yes, it's very important. All the highways, like London to Windsor, are being updated by our government to make them safer—create more lanes. Instead of two, we have three lanes now. There's still a small part between Woodstock and Kitchener. Hopefully they'll be connected and widened very soon. It's very important to give the opportunity for many cars to go on the highway—



**Mr. Mike Colle:** Especially when the snow comes.

**Mr. Khalil Ramal:** Especially when we have snow on a narrower road. We will have more ability to accommodate many cars on the highway.

From what I learned when I was asked to speak on this bill, many trucks are already equipped with electronic devices. They can accept those limiters to guard the limit and also to give them the ability to control their speed on the highway. Almost 95% of the trucks in Ontario already have those tools. So it won't cost them much money to be updated. It costs, I think, about \$100. The remaining 5% of the trucks that cannot be updated—I think this legislation exempts them from being asked to put guards on their speed limits or from being regulated for the time limiters or speed limiters.

This legislation is a very important piece of legislation to protect our people in the province of Ontario and also to create some kind of safety mechanism. As I mentioned, it's important not just for us as drivers of small vehicles; it's also important for the company that owns the trucks to make sure the drivers drive carefully and the limit is put on their trucks so they cannot speed or go over the limit; to create safety for them and for the truck.

I want to tell you something very important. Many people who drive those trucks can make a living from driving more miles, or they want to go from point A to point Z in a certain time, and they get a bonus by delivering the goods fast and quick. That's why they think of the speed. They can go and make extra money.

So this legislation puts some kind of limit on their thinking and also gives them some self-control. It doesn't encourage them to speed. Also, the OPP and many different police safety mechanisms in the province of Ontario congratulate the government for bringing such important tools to help them control the traffic and accidents, and also the speed limit on the highways. All of us sometimes face some kind of tragedy when you see a big huge truck hitting small cars or small cars cutting off the big trucks.

This mechanism and these important initiatives will help us to create a safe environment, safe roads and safe communities. That's why I've been listening to many different speakers from both sides of the House. I think it's an important bill. Hopefully all of us in the end will go and support this bill.

I heard so many different comments, of people not fully committed from the Conservatives and the NDP until they hear many people come forward and give their advice. I welcome this idea. Hopefully this bill will go to the committee. We're going to listen to the drivers, listen to the operators; we're going to listen to many experts in this field. It's important to seek advice. It's important to have a strong bill that can be carried for a long time. It is our aim and our goal to create safe roads and to create safety for the people who drive on the highways. It's important for us.

Those industries generate more than \$200 billion on a yearly basis. It's good for our economy. We don't want to jeopardize their business. We don't want to get them

out of business. We want to make sure they prosper, do their job well and are protected, while also protecting other people who drive beside them.

Thank you for allowing me to speak.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott):** Questions and comments?

**Mr. John O'Toole:** It is always a pleasure to listen. Today the member is talking on a bill that I have some comfort in, with respect to the issue of the speed limiter. Our member Laurie Scott, the member from Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock, brought this bill in for the right reasons. I was, at the time, the critic of transportation.

I found there were several contradictory implications here: first of all, that the registered speed limit on our provincial highways is 100 kilometres, not 105, not 110. We could have a whole discussion on whether or not the speed limit should be raised to 105, because that's what the limiters are going to do—or should it be 120 with the design capacity of what the highway is? That's another issue. There's nothing in this bill dealing—they always say it's an environmental bill; it's going to reduce emissions. I'd like to see the reports. They're talking about it, so either they have been given the notes to read—and the member from London-Fanshawe read the notes very well. I'd like to see the reports, not just the notes that he was given by the minister to read.

The inter-jurisdictional issues—in transportation you have inter-provincial and -country issues, where speed limiters may or may not—are they going to be competitive? I've heard in my riding of Durham from independent truckers, who have to pay the fines, and that's an issue for the minister of highways, Solicitor General, of enforcing the rules of the highway, but they have to compete, and that's important too. The independent truckers tell me that this is all supported by the Ontario Trucking Association as a means of putting small independents out of business, making them less competitive.

I would challenge whether or not Chief Fantino is going to argue the enforcement issue on this—

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott):** Thank you. Questions and comments.

**Ms. Andrea Horwath:** It's my pleasure to make a few remarks on the speech from the member for London-Fanshawe. I have to say, he shared with the House his previous business and coincidentally, when he became someone who sat nearby me not too long ago, when he got moved to—I guess it's the rump; sorry, member from London-Fanshawe—he got moved to the rump, but he did have the pleasure of sitting beside me, which is good. We did start talking about his previous business. Lo and behold, it turns out that he actually supplied, in his work, a convenience store that was in the neighbourhood in which I used to live. In fact, my father-in-law still lives in that house. We talked a little bit about our commonality—it's like six degrees of separation, as they say—about the fact that that particular convenience store located in my old neighbourhood was one that he used to



supply goods to. I think that was kind of a neat thing that we could find in common.

But where we do disagree, unfortunately, is that this member actually believes, as you heard in his remarks, that the government is doing a great job on climate change. I would have to say, I don't think that a 2% decrease in some—we don't know what the decrease is in; a previous member had indicated a 2% decrease in greenhouse gas emissions—from what year, we don't know—allegedly going to be reduced 2% in the year 2014, which is quite a ways away. All of these statistics and numbers that get thrown out by the government are simply a way of obfuscating the fact that the reality is, they don't have a climate change plan and they don't have a way to assure the people of Ontario that we will have a reduction in greenhouse gases in a significant way in this province, in a way—which I think this member mentioned—that people are demanding in the province of Ontario. It's a pretty sad state of affairs when we look to 2014 for a reduction of some 2% of some number that we can't even identify.

**Mrs. Maria Van Bommel:** I simply want to enter into the debate on this one. When we have situations on the highways—and, as the member for London–Fanshawe talked about, I know we get intimidated. These are big trucks. They're moving along quickly, and when you're in a small car, it can be a bit intimidating to be there.

But still, on the whole, I want to address this issue because I have a son-in-law who's an owner-operator. He had some very good questions to me about this whole issue. He can't afford, as an owner-operator, to drive very much faster than 100 anyway, because every time he goes faster, the cost of the diesel gets higher, and the cost of the diesel impacts very directly on the bottom line and on his profit.

He does long-haul. He does a run to Alabama every week. It's not an easy life. There's no question about it. It's certainly not an easy life for my daughter and the children either. He's gone for great lengths of time, and she's basically, in a great sense, a single mom during those periods.

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When he comes and says to me that he wants a level playing field whereby he travels at the speed limit, he wants the others to do the same. He'd like to be in a situation where his competitors, because he is independent, are travelling at the same speeds and have to travel at those speeds the way he does. For him, a limiter is just an accessory that he probably won't use. We had some question about whether or not those things should be turned off or on, but when I talked to Charlie, he said to me, "When I cross the border, I don't go any faster. The price of diesel is the same or just as expensive over there as it is over here." If he can cross the border and he doesn't have to use the limiter, he will still travel at that speed because he can't afford the diesel.

There is a lot to be said for the independent owner-operators, who feel that this is an important thing for them to level their playing field.

**Mr. Norm Miller:** I'm pleased to add some comments to the speech from the member for London–Fanshawe on Bill 41, the Highway Traffic Amendment Act (Speed-Limiting Systems). I'm generally supportive of this, but I really want to see it go to committee because I suspect that there are a lot of independent operators out there who are probably completely unaware that this bill is even being debated, and I suspect that there are a few of them who won't necessarily be in favour of it. We've talked about there being environmental advantages and safety advantages and it being good for just about everything, but I think we need to see the facts and we need to give all those who might be concerned with this bill a chance to have their say.

Now, the member from London–Fanshawe gave an example of an accident where he was cut off by a truck that was in fact cut off by a car. I note a recent article in the *Barrie Examiner*: "Truckers Not Gassed Up Over Speed Limiters." In it, there's a quote: "If everybody was doing the speed limit it would be fine, but all the cars are designed to be so fast these days," he said, adding, "it's the vehicles which weave in and out of traffic who cause the situations." That sounds exactly like the situation that the member from London–Fanshawe was describing.

This bill is certainly worthy of consideration, but I really do think we need to hear from independent operators as well as the big companies, and the general public and safety experts as well, to know that this in fact makes sense. I'm sure there are operators out there who own their own truck and would not be happy about being told what speed they can drive at. If you did the same for automobile drivers, they probably would not be too happy about it.

My other question would be: What is the posted speed limit for? Perhaps we need more enforcement of the regular speed limit.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott):** The member for London–Fanshawe has two minutes to reply.

**Mr. Khalil Ramal:** I want to thank the members from Durham, Hamilton Centre, Lambton–Kent–Middlesex and Parry Sound–Muskoka for commenting on my speech.

This bill is very important for the safety of the people of Ontario, especially those in the cities that happen to be on highways, like London, especially in my riding of London–Fanshawe. It happens to be close to Highway 401, and we see a lot of trucks. We examine a lot of accidents and see a lot of fatalities and problems on the highway.

This bill will help to protect the drivers who drive in those trucks. Everybody knows that the limit to drive on the highway, especially the 401, is only 100. This bill is going to make sure those truckers cannot speed if they want to speed, for their own safety and the safety of others who drive on the same highway.

I want to tell many other people who spoke before that it's very important for the environment. The member for Lambton–Kent–Middlesex spoke before me, and she said



it's very important for drivers, especially if you own your own trucks, to go at the same speed not just across Ontario but across North America, especially when you take goods from Ontario to the United States. You would save energy, you would save gas, and gas these days is very expensive. When you intend to speed, you push more, and then you cannot burn all the gas you are pushing and using, and the engine will spit it out, and it's going to go to waste and harm our environment and also affect the pockets of the people who are operating those trucks.

So, for their own good, for their own safety, for their own savings, it's important for them to drive at a level of speed that cannot hurt others and that will also save money. Because at the end of the day, it's important to create safety mechanisms not just for a certain element of our community but for everyone.

I think it's a very important bill, and I hope all the members in this House will support it. I'm looking forward to hearing more on this topic.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott):** Further debate?

**Mr. Tim Hudak:** I'm pleased to enter into the debate on this evening's bill dealing with speed limiters on trucks, Bill 41.

I have a few comments based on what I've heard from constituents, obviously from the Ontario Trucking Association as well, and some comments on the government's approach to this issue.

I echo the comments made by my colleagues from Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington and Parry Sound-Muskoka this evening that it will be important for this bill to go to committee for close inspection. We haven't heard, for example, from independent operators. They're independent, and they may not have a chance, by definition, to respond with great speed, as the Ontario Trucking Association does, with their point of view. I, as a member of the assembly, would enjoy hearing from independent truckers about their views on this legislation through the committee process.

I want to, from the outset, make some comments and offer a commendation to my colleague from Haliburton-Victoria-Brock, if I remember the riding, although I know the riding boundaries have changed. She spoke a bit earlier this afternoon, and appropriately so, because Laurie Scott was the member who brought this bill forward in the form of Bill 115, a private member's bill, back in May 2006. I appreciate the fact that the Minister of Transportation tonight recognized the work that my colleague had done on moving this bill forward. She was a groundbreaker in this respect. I know she received many messages both for and against her private member's bill, but to her credit, she brought it forward in the assembly and pushed it. While we had hoped that we would be on the government side, it is always rewarding when you see a private member's bill taken up by the government, because it does then get more debate time, and hopefully it will get to a third reading debate in the

assembly. Again, I was pleased that Ms. Scott's hard work was recognized by the minister this evening.

On the topic of private members' bills, I certainly do hope, for example, that my private member's bill, the Homestead Act, which would cap property assessment increases at a maximum of 5% a year, would similarly be taken up as a government bill. Granted, it would be nice to have a third reading on that bill and a true up-and-down vote to see where the Liberals stand on the issue of skyrocketing property assessments, but failing that—because last time around, they did not allow a third reading vote to take place—if the government takes this up as their own bill, I would certainly support that just to see the notion of caps brought in.

So we've seen this private member's bill, Bill 115, move forward, and I'd just suggest to my colleague from Mississauga that if the Homestead Act were to move forward in a similar manner, I would enjoy seeing caps to protect property owners in the province of Ontario who are about to see skyrocketing assessments because the McGuinty government—

**Mr. Lou Rinaldi:** On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I'm just wondering how property assessment relates to the legislation we're debating tonight.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Pat Hoy):** Member for Niagara West—Glanbrook?

**Mr. Tim Hudak:** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the question from the member for Northumberland. As I was saying, this was originally a private member's bill, Bill 115, by the member from Haliburton-Victoria-Brock. It didn't get to a third reading vote and is now a government bill. So I'm simply suggesting that if you follow that pattern with Ms. Scott's bill, similarly, you could follow that pattern when it comes to skyrocketing property assessments under the Homestead Act. That's clearly how the two are related. Obviously, it would be nice to have a third reading up-and-down vote, which was denied by the McGuinty government in 2006 and 2007.

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**Hon. Jim Watson:** Shame.

**Mr. Tim Hudak:** I agree. One of the members says "shame" about that. I agree wholeheartedly. Nonetheless, if it's not brought forward for a third reading as a private member's bill, I would certainly support the government bringing forward caps on assessment as they have followed through with Bill 115 by Ms. Scott.

The thing I worry about, though, when you look back in Hansard when the government introduced this bill standing in the name of the Minister of Transportation Jim Bradley, Ms. Scott replied in Hansard that day, correctly so, "I introduced Bill 115, the Highway Traffic Amendment Act, known as the speed limiter bill, to this Legislature," which is very true. She did a lot of hard work on that, brought forward the initiative and was probably one of the first in Canada to begin speaking about this issue as an elected official.

"The Ontario Trucking Association, which is here today"—meaning the day the bill was introduced—"has



been advocating for this very concept and has been a leader on this front, and they've literally been waiting for the Liberals to get on board. So I want to thank them for all the support that we've received. This isn't a new parade, but once again, as we've so often seen before, the McGuinty parade crashers have jumped in front of the parade and pretended to take the lead."

Parade crashers—you might remember from the movie *Animal House* what happened with the parade crashers at the end of that famous film.

She goes on to say that, "Prior to October's election, the Premier travelled all over the province making election announcements on the taxpayer's dime, including a bunch of last-minute environmental items. The minister has asked all members to support this bill, but I think it's also very important to remind everyone here that despite what members of the government are trying to convey now, the Minister of Health himself voted against the legislation when I introduced it."

I find that rather ironic, that the Minister of Health, whom you'd think—I know that they snapped away health promotion to give it to then-Minister Watson for health promotion. Surely that wasn't because Minister of Health Smitherman is against health promotion; I would think not. You would think not, but for some reason he decided to come into the assembly to vote against Ms. Scott's bill, Bill 115, which is practically an identical twin to the bill before the House today—

**Ms. Andrea Horwath:** As long as it's not an evil twin.

**Mr. Tim Hudak:** It's certainly not an evil twin, I'd say to my colleague from Hamilton East. Is a good twin the opposite of evil twin?

**Ms. Andrea Horwath:** Yes.

**Mr. Tim Hudak:** —because the bills are similar in their scope and their impact.

Mr. Speaker, you're a veteran here of the assembly. It's rare that cabinet ministers would come in to vote on a private member's bill. The tradition in the Legislature has been that that's private members' time to discuss bills, to vote in favour or against them and then they would come back to the House, ideally through committee, for third reading.

So it was rather odd that the health minister, in Ms. Scott's words, "rapidly" ran back to his seat from the back room to "voice his displeasure" on the private member's bill, which is the same one that was introduced by the Minister of Transportation. Hopefully, the Minister of Health will take to the floor and explain why, two years ago, he was against this bill and now seems to be in favour of the exact same thing. He may use the evil twin argument. He may very well use that, which is a rare thing in the Legislature but common in soap operas, but I do look forward to his comments—speaking of evil twins.

I think one of the key backroom players on this bill we haven't heard from is Phil McNeely, the member from Ottawa-Orléans. I know that just a few moments ago he was speaking with the Minister of Municipal Affairs and

Housing, who, I'm sure, was twisting his arm to support this bill standing in the name of the Minister of Transportation. Folks may remember that one of the most adamant in opposition to Ms. Scott's bill was the very member from Ottawa-Orléans, Mr. McNeely.

When you look back at some of his quotes during debate—boy, oh, boy, there seemed to be nothing that he was more against than speed limiters. I'll direct you to Hansard of June 1, 2006, where Mr. McNeely, the member for Ottawa-Orléans, said, "Interestingly, in Europe, where they've mandated speed limiters, drivers are generally paid on an hourly basis; however, in Ontario, drivers are paid on the mileage travelled, so this initiative would have a real impact on the earnings of truck drivers, who already work long hours for modest pay. The negative impact on independent business is one of the factors that must be weighed against the obvious environmental benefits." That was Mr. McNeely.

Mr. McNeely goes on to say that, "Another potential issue that this bill raises is the"—

**Mr. Michael A. Brown:** The riding.

**Mr. Tim Hudak:** Pardon me? From Ottawa-Orléans. I thought I said that. It should be interesting to see how that conversation plays out in Hansard.

"Another potential issue that this bill raises is the issue of economic competitiveness. Trucking is, by nature, an inter-jurisdictional enterprise, and we compete with various provinces and with the United States. Ontario-based carriers run 25% of their miles" outside of the province, I think he goes on to say, in stating his adamant, hell-or-high-water opposition to speed limiters.

I do look forward to the comments of the member from Ottawa-Orléans, the then-parliamentary assistant to transportation, who really has a thing against speed limiters. I will be curious to see how he reconciles that with his pending vote on Bill 41 before the assembly today. Anyway, speaking of evil twins, I will now leave Mr. McNeely's comments behind and just look forward to his debate on this bill.

As I mentioned, there seems to be a difference of opinion in different trucking associations on this bill. I recall not too long ago being approached by a constituent in a pet food store in my riding while buying some food for our cats, Bogart and Sam. A constituent approached me at that point in time who was very concerned—he's an independent trucker—with the impacts of speed limiters. I hope that whether it's he himself or others, independent truckers have a chance at committee to make their concerns known.

The Ontario Trucking Association, on the other hand, has very strong comments in favour of the legislation. They did a press release on March 19, 2008, in which the headline read: "Truck Speed Limiter Law Introduced in the Ontario Legislature: Major Step Forward for Safety and the Environment, Says the Ontario Trucking Association."

I thought this was cute: The president, David Bradley, they put in brackets, is "no relation to the transportation minister" Jim Bradley. I'm sure there are a few good



jokes back and forth about that. Which one is the smarter and younger brother? I would ask my friends across the way.

**Hon. Jim Watson:** Evil twin.

**Mr. Tim Hudak:** More evil twins.

Mr. Bradley the OTA representative, not the minister, "called it 'a significant step forward for highway safety and for reducing greenhouse gas emissions.'"

The press release by the OTA goes on to note a few of the reasons why they support speed limiters, also known as speed governors in other jurisdictions. They mention, "The activation of speed limiters has been mandated in the European Union for well over a decade, and, according to OTA, at least half of the trucks currently operating on Ontario's highways" today "have activated their speed limiters. Quebec passed similar legislation late last year and is expected to coordinate implementation with Ontario." There are other comments that they make about the legislation and why they favour this.

I know Mark Bylsma, who is a constituent of mine—a regional councillor, as a matter of fact, and doing a good job at that on behalf of the citizens of Lincoln in Niagara. His day job, so to speak, is that he runs Spring Creek Carriers, a successful concern in St. Catharines. Mr. Bylsma, I know, is supportive of the OTA's position. He already says that a lot of his trucks currently have governors that are active, and when they're traveling through the states, a significant number of those jurisdictions have legislation of a similar nature. As a constituent of mine, he has recommended supporting this legislation.

Mr. Bylsma and those at the OTA and others like the Ontario safety authority—the Canada Safety Council; I should be clear on this one—do note a few important facts. The Canada Safety Council notes that, "A speed limiter, sometimes called a governor, is a built-in microchip that allows a truck engine's top speed to be preset. Trucks built in the last decade come equipped with this technology. Nonetheless, regulation would ensure all trucks operate at a safe speed. That would reduce highway collisions related to tailgating and improper lane changes," in their opinion. They also talk about their perception of environmental advantages from this initiative.

And I do recall, too—I think the federal government was looking at, as part of their Kyoto targets, speed limiters across Canada. I'm not sure, Mr. Speaker; you would probably know more than I if this is an area of federal jurisdiction or provincial jurisdiction and what is appropriate, but I know that study does continue.

I assume my colleague from Ottawa-Orleans is in the House, and I look forward to his comments on the evil twin—

*Interjection.*

**Mr. Tim Hudak:** Orleans. Ottawa-Orleans. As I said, "Orleans."

**Mr. Michael Prue:** Say it in French: Orléans.

**Mr. Tim Hudak:** Orléans. I'll remember it that way—Orléans. Ottawa-Orléans.

The safety council's document also gives an estimate of fuel savings of up to 10,500 litres of diesel fuel per year for a typical tractor-trailer unit, or 50 million litres in total for all trucks in Ontario. Their estimate is that at today's diesel prices, this would equate to annual savings of about \$8,400 per truck. That's what the Canada Safety Council has to say.

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They explain their support for 105 kilometres as well, noting that, "The cruise speed for most trucks will be set at no more than 100 kph"—kilometres per hour—"but a cushion of up to 5 kph will be allowed on the 'pedal' speed to enable trucks to pass slower moving vehicles (avoiding long periods where trucks operate side-by-side called 'elephant races')."

The Canada Safety Council also notes—as does the Ontario Trucking Association—in most of their material that, "Truck drivers are less likely than other drivers to operate at excessive speed. From small, sporty cars to trucks and SUVs, passenger vehicles on Canada's roads are capable of very high speeds." They make the case that truck drivers—largely their members—operate their vehicles with great concern for public safety and try to obey the speed limits where they can. It's good for the groups to make that point in advocacy of this legislation.

Of course, there's the other side of the coin. If you peruse some of the letters to the editor that have been popping up, they tell you that not everyone in the industry is in accordance with the Ontario Trucking Association or the Canada Safety Council. Cassey Hiebert, for example, wrote a letter to the editor in the Windsor Star noting, "I had to comment on two items in the Windsor Star on the same day. Re: Truckers Feeling the Pinch of Rising Fuel Costs, March 20, by Diane Fick.

"It is of great concern. Truckers can't make a living anymore with the price of fuel and I agree with her that something needs to be done.

"Then I read that Ontario's transportation minister wants to regulate the speed limit on big rigs.

"Although I am all for saving the environment, with the price of fuel, there will be no trucks on the road to pollute.

"Truckers are generally more careful on the road than most drivers and it's been my experience that most accidents involving trucks are caused by truckers trying to avoid accidents, not cause them."

There certainly is a point of view, I think very well held, that with the high price of fuel these days, it's already putting a significant pinch on the transportation sector. When we see the 192,000 or so well-paying manufacturing jobs flee our province under Dalton McGuinty's high taxes, runaway spending and high energy costs, we should have great sympathy in this assembly for those involved in the trucking sector. It's often the first sector to show an economic slowdown, and I think most truck operators will relate back to the members of the assembly that they're experiencing that today with the slow nature of the Ontario economy. I don't have to remind you, Mr. Speaker, that Ontario's



economy now, under Dalton McGuinty, is the slowest-growing economy in all of Canada this past year and is projected to be last or second-to-last in the year ahead.

Truck drivers are also experiencing considerable delays at the border. A large part of our business involves international trade and we need to make sure that we properly invest in border infrastructure to facilitate trade and hopefully take our trading relationship with the United States to the next level in order to allow freer shipment of goods and services between the two countries, while concentrating on those that are smuggling contraband across our border.

Similar to Cassey Hiebert, Ed Wesselius writes in the Guelph Mercury a letter entitled "Province shouldn't mandate use of speed limiters on trucks." Mr. Wesselius notes that he's been in the trucking industry for more than 40 years and says, "Most people are misinformed about what a speed limiter actually is and what it does on a commercial vehicle."

He explains a little bit and says, "There's a perception that a speed limiter on a commercial vehicle is often being likened to cruise control on a car. This is misguided thinking since there is a vast difference in their operation and intent. What a speed limiter does is actually take the control of the truck's engine away progressively until there isn't any more power and control of the truck by the driver at the pre-programmed top speed. The similarity to cruise control in a car stops there.

"In fact," he goes on to say "a speed limiter on a truck is designed with the opposite effect as a cruise control. Most modern trucks also have cruise control that can, unlike a speed limiter, be controlled by the drivers."

Mr. Wesselius's letter to the Guelph Mercury is another reason why I think it's important for the minister and members of the assembly to hear directly from those who may have a differing opinion than the umbrella associations, particularly those who may not have the time, right at this point in time, but if there's plenty of notice for committee, will then take the time to present to members for their consideration on this bill.

The last thing I wanted to mention—I heard my colleague from Hamilton East talk about environmental impacts, and as a member for the Lake Ontario, formerly Lake Erie and the Niagara River area—although not many big ships use the Niagara River because of the waterfalls, obviously—I do want to make a promotion for better use of what they call Highway H<sub>2</sub>O. I know my colleague from Algoma-Manitoulin will be supportive of that, considering the importance of the shipping industry to his riding as well.

Hopefully, both provincial and federal governments will encourage and support the shipbuilding industry and encourage shipping through the Welland Canal and across our Great Lakes. It does remove vehicles from the road, it has environmental benefits, and it also will help create jobs in the riding of Niagara West—Glanbrook, which is always a good thing that I support.

I thank you for your time and rapt attention to my remarks on Bill 41.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott):** Questions and comments?

**Mr. Michael Prue:** I want to assuage the fears of my friend from Niagara West—Glanbrook. He wondered profoundly what was going to happen to the Minister of Health and what was going to happen to the member from Ottawa—Orléans when this bill finally came to a vote.

I would just like to remember a little bit of history of my own. At Toronto city council, we had a huge debate about the closing down of the Adams mine. I remember the two councillors who spoke most vociferously on keeping that Adams mine open. They were my colleagues then: Bas Balkissoon and Brad Duguid. They were so adamant that the Adams mine was the only option to get rid of Toronto's garbage. You can imagine my shock when they morphed into the members from Scarborough Centre and Scarborough—Rouge River and came into this very House and voted with the government to close down the Adams mine option altogether, stating that it was a wrong thing to do.

I was really quite surprised and pleasantly bemused, but it all becomes a factor of whether you're in the government or not in the government. At Toronto city council they were in the shadow cabinet of the mayor of the day, Mel Lastman, who really wanted it. When they came here, they were on the government side, which really didn't want it. So it was very easy for them to shift and weave and bob.

I want to assuage the fear of the member from Niagara West—Glanbrook that you will see the selfsame thing happen in this particular bill. You will see—and mark my words: The Minister of Health will, if not speak to the issue, dutifully vote for it on the day that it is called in question.

I wait to see whether or not the honourable member from Ottawa—Orléans will do the selfsame. I am looking forward to what he has to say on the bill, but I will guarantee you that, come the day on which we vote, he will be on his feet supporting this government bill with all the power that he has.

**Hon. Jim Watson:** Before I talk about the specific items that have been raised, I just wanted to take a moment to congratulate two individuals in Ottawa—Ron Jette and Kimothy Walker—who are putting forward a new network to put child sexual abuse on the national agenda. This is something that is very personal to these individuals—

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott):** I have to ask the minister: How does this pertain to the bill that's being debated this afternoon?

*Interjection.*

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott):** Okay. Thank you.

**Hon. Jim Watson:** I'd like to thank Ron Jette and Kimothy Walker, who have put forward a proposal to establish a new network on child sexual abuse on the



national agenda. This is something that's deeply personal to these individuals, and I commend them for the work that they're doing. It's called the Child Sexual Abuse Prevention Network. It's a non-profit, grassroots organization that brings people, services and research together. I very much commend those individuals and congratulate them on the launch of this particular network.

I'm very supportive of the particular bill for a number of reasons. Let me talk just briefly, in the last moment, on the environmental benefits and give particular credit to my colleague the honourable member from Ottawa-Orléans, because he established Climate Change Awareness Day on April 21. It's going to be hosted in his riding with Chris Day.

This bill will reduce, by 280,000 tonnes, greenhouse gas emissions. It's the equivalent of taking 2,700 tractor-trailers off the road. One hundred million fewer litres of diesel fuel will be used by the trucking industry as a result of this particular legislation.

I think this is becoming a bipartisan piece of legislation, because I commend Laurie Scott for the work that she did and congratulate our Minister of Transportation for bringing it forward as a government bill.

1730

**Mr. Randy Hillier:** Clearly some ministers have difficulty following the discussion and debate on some subjects.

It was interesting that during the discussion, after I spoke about how the speed limiters would limit control and take away the judgment of the driver, the honourable member from London-Fanshawe got up and spoke about how drivers get bonuses for driving. He mentioned in his discussion that these speed limiters would limit thinking. He was promoting this, that this would be a good thing if we limited the thinking of drivers. I'm not sure that's really what people had in mind about this bill: limiting people's thinking.

There was also another item mentioned: that these chips will prevent improper lane changes. I know that technology does a lot of things, but how a chip that limits speed is going to prevent improper lane changes is quite a piece of technology.

Anyway, the other concern that I have is the regulatory creep of this Parliament. Of course, under this legislation, the regulations will be crafted up afterwards, beyond the purview of this assembly. I think it's clear that there are some people who would like to see the drivers restricted and actually replaced and put the nanny state in the driver's seat of Ontario trucks.

**Ms. Andrea Horwath:** It's my pleasure to make a few remarks about the speech by the member from Niagara West-Glanbrook, now a member representing a portion—a small portion, it may be, but an important portion—of the fair city of Hamilton. I welcome him as a representative of a portion of our great city, and you can see why: because his comments were relevant in regard to this bill and the effect of this bill. I do have to remark that I did think it was important that he remarked on some of the history of voting on this very bill when it

was brought to the House by a member from his caucus not so long ago.

I think it's interesting that the minister who made remarks on his speech just prior felt it necessary to defend that member in regard to some of the other activities he's undertaking in his riding; of course, that was the member from Ottawa-Orléans.

Nonetheless, I think it's very clear that this member has indicated—the member from Niagara West-Glanbrook—that this bill has its merits, and it's had its merits for some time now. Unfortunately, only some people recognized its merits along this journey that it has taken so far. Certainly the Minister of Transportation has acknowledged its merits and still brought it forward, notwithstanding the fact that the initiation of the bill came from an opposition member. That is certainly laudable.

Notwithstanding the allusion to possible evil twins in the speech and a little bit of back-and-forth in a comedic way, the reality is that this is an opportunity for all members to get behind this bill if the government does the right thing and if there is an opportunity for that public discourse through the public hearings process. Pretty much every member who has spoken about this bill thinks there is room for improvement, some room for amendments but certainly some room for public discussion.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott):** The member for Niagara West-Glanbrook has two minutes to reply.

**Mr. Tim Hudak:** I enjoyed the very interesting responses to my speech. The Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing talked about two constituents from his riding. I was trying to figure out the connection, although, of course, my name being Tim—"Timothy" is on my birth certificate—one of his constituents is named Kimothy; one letter difference. That was obviously the connection to my remarks.

My colleague from Beaches-East York is right. I had forgotten about the transfiguration machine in the Premier's office that the members for—Scarborough Southwest, was it?—Scarborough-Rouge River and Scarborough Centre, now the Minister of Labour, had gone through, where they mutated into members who were Adams mine opposers and had formerly supported the Adams mine.

I worry about the Minister of Health and the member for Ottawa-Orléans having to go through the transfiguration machine themselves, but I know they're going to fight the power all the way, kicking and screaming through the transfiguration machine, because nobody is going to tell the member for Ottawa-Orléans what to do and nobody is going to tell the Minister of Health what to do.

*Interjection.*

**Mr. Tim Hudak:** My colleague for Hamilton East-Stoney Creek said, "I don't know if they're evil twins." I don't know which one is Mini-Me and which one is Dr. Evil. We'll find out later, in the debate and in the vote, where they stand.



To my earlier comments, I think I should note for the assembly that the Owner-Operator Independent Drivers Association did a release from a place called Grain Valley, Missouri. I've never had the pleasure of visiting Grain Valley, but I've been to the state of Missouri. I think they would know from trucking in Grain Valley, Missouri. They actually announced their opposition to this bill, in conjunction with the Owner-Operators Business Association of Canada. They say that many of the OTA's members might support it, but theirs do not. That's all the more reason for comprehensive hearings to hear from the competing associations about how this bill should move forward.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott):** Further debate?

**Mr. Michael Prue:** I wonder if people watching the television, people who are not part of the camaraderie in this place, are wondering why speaker after speaker stands up to speak in favour of the same bill. Although some of the speeches are funny and some of them contain wit and wisdom and past experience and allusions to characters near and dear to our hearts like Dr. Evil and Mini-Me, the reality is that this bill is going to receive pretty much unanimous agreement and be ordered to committee. Really, that's what I want to talk about: the committee aspect and what we should be looking at in committee.

I want to tell all members, I know it's going to pass and you all know it's going to pass. I wonder why we need much more debate—although I do have a few things I want to put on the record and perhaps other members do, too. But this will become less and less obvious as more and more members stand up, because I don't know what else will need to be said.

Having said that, part of the problem we have with the trucking industry and part of the reason that we need this bill is that we have developed a system in North America which is not based on transporting goods from one place to another, solely and exclusively, but transporting them on an hourly, and sometimes by the minute, demand. The goods move back and forth across the province or back and forth across the continent, so that there is same-time or same-hour delivery mandated.

Several members of the Legislature and I had the opportunity to go down to Detroit a couple of weeks ago to look at the situation there: the need for a new bridge, the need to get the trucks moving back and forth across the St. Clair River—

**Mr. Michael A. Brown:** The Detroit River.

**Mr. Michael Prue:** Sorry. Across the Detroit River, just at Lake St. Clair. Excuse me. Thank you very much. You're absolutely right.

We looked at the locations. But some of the stories that we were being told by the customs and excise officials in the United States, the customs officials in Canada, and some of the people who were involved in the Canadian department of international trade, were about how many times goods would move back and forth across the river in order to complete a finished product.

One of the stories that fascinated me, of course, the most was about cars and car parts. Parts of a car would be transported, not once, not twice, but up to six and eight times between the first, initial phases of the car being built and its finalization. The car parts, as everyone knows, are built. The same day they are built, they are moved across the river to another location. They are done on an hourly basis so that there doesn't have to be any storage. So, it is built, then it is put in place. We all know that when there is a strike in one plant, quite often the others are forced to shut down because they have no car parts available to them. That's what happens. I'm just giving this by way of anecdote.

1740

The second one was a canning factory in southwestern Ontario for jams. They took jars from one portion and took them across the river and then they came back on the other—it was really quite fascinating to listen to all of it, but it was an on-hour or on-time rationale for delivering the goods and services. This is part of the problem, because the truckers have the unenviable responsibility of making sure that the goods get there precisely on time, and they have to make up that time. It is not simply a matter of delivering the car part to the other side and putting it in a storage shed where it might be used a week or a month later. It's making sure it is delivered directly to the factory and put on the assembly line. They reload the trucks with more-completed parts to take them back across the river, and the process continues and continues. If it breaks down for even a few hours, it will throw the plant into chaos.

We need to understand that that is what is happening. If we are going to limit, and I believe we should limit, the speed at which the trucks operate, we also have to work with industry to modify the just-in-time delivery schedules that most industries have come to rely upon today.

Having said that, I just want to make sure the minister is aware, by what is here in Hansard, that this is part of what drives the truckers to make up time when and if they fall behind either because of weather, delays at the border, delays in loading or delays in one manufacturer trying to get it to another location, and of the need to look at more long-term solutions in not having just-in-time delivery, but in helping industries to have adequate supplies so that if you are an hour or two hours late or a day delayed because of inclement weather or any other natural or unnatural phenomenon, that industry will not completely fall apart and break down.

The second thing that I wanted to talk about is the fact that in the legislation there is no actual speed limit within the body of the bill. It is allowed for by regulation, so that ministers can change the actual speed limit, which is purported to be 105 kilometres an hour, at any time, either lowering it or raising it. I'm not sure that we should be going down that road. I hope the truckers can come and speak to it. But there should be legislation in place that sets the actual amount, and that legislation should be set in concurrence with Canadian and other provincial standards. The truckers move back and forth



across huge, vast, enormous distances in Canada. To travel from Quebec through Ontario to Manitoba, only that little portion, is into the thousands of kilometres. We need to make sure the bill is articulated in such a way that we are in complete conformity or near-complete conformity with the rules in Quebec and Manitoba and, of course, the rules of our biggest trading partner on the other side of the Detroit River. I'm not sure that that's there, and I'm not sure that the minister needs the authority to set it in regulation. I do believe it should be set by this Legislature, and that if it ever needs to be amended, the entire Legislature should have an opportunity to look at it again.

I believe the province must work with the federal and provincial counterparts to ensure that trade is not negatively impacted as a result of the bill. As I've said, that will require us sitting down with industry and changing the whole reliance on just-in-time delivery.

I believe that we need to address climate change in a way that I do not see within the body of the bill, but I do see the member from Ottawa-Orléans here being very happy in terms of the climate change and his contribution to climate change around this bill. It cannot be piecemeal. It must not be piecemeal. We have looked at what has happened in the province of Quebec, and, quite clearly, they are integrating the speed-limiter legislation into a comprehensive climate change plan. This bill cannot and should not stand alone. If the true goal here, or one of the major goals of this legislation, is to help the province meet the climate change objectives, then it should be part of the plan as well and should not be left to regulation. It should be part of the plan. If the government is serious, then they should also be proud if that's what it's going to do.

I heard one of the members earlier say in the questions and comments stage that this may reduce greenhouse gases by some 2%. Although any reduction is laudable, that seems to be a fairly small amount, given the enormity of what is going on.

I also note that the truckers seem to have some considerable difficulty with the bill, and we have heard from a couple of groups. My friend from Niagara West-Glanbrook did talk about some of the truckers, and I, too, received a couple of quotations from the major trucking organizations. One was the Teamsters. My information is that the Teamsters oppose this move nationally. They believe that limiters will not actually make roads safer. In some cases, delimiters may increase the likelihood of accidents. For example, they say, some truckers at the top of a hill may be led to shift into neutral—and I guess this is where my friend got this—in order to coast, and this would deactivate the braking system.

The other group is the Owner-Operator Independent Drivers Association, which is a trans-border US-Canada truckers' organization that opposes the move, stating that it's "a one-sided gift to big business ... disguised as sound science." The association notes that speeding up is often safe and necessary with merging traffic and may result in clogged roads when trucks pass each other.

I believe that we need to send this to committee. We need to make sure that our bill is in synchronization with other jurisdictions, both in Canada and the United States. We need to make sure that we have worked carefully with companies who rely on just-in-time delivery to assist them, on the Canadian side at least, and on the Ontario side especially, to make sure that there are stockpiles available so that just-in-time delivery is not a necessity, so that if someone is delayed, they're not trying to break laws, they're not trying to unhook speed limiters and to drive unsafely, but that they have the option of maybe being an hour or two late without putting other jobs at risk.

We need to work with environmental groups to ensure that this bill will do what's been done in Quebec, and that is, marry the two concepts in integrating the speed-limiter legislation into a comprehensive climate change plan.

I'm not going to use all of my time here today because I don't think it's necessary. I am asking that the government members clearly look at what the opposition is trying to say here. We are saying that we support the bill. We are asking only for a realistic and fulsome debate in committee. We are asking that people who are vitally affected have the opportunity to come forward and present the arguments they want, and we're asking the government to look at other jurisdictions, particularly the province of Quebec, in developing a true environmental plan.

I can see my colleague from Ottawa-Orléans waving a little. I know he has his own plan. I would ask the committee to listen very carefully to what the member from Ottawa-Orléans has in his own plan, because maybe his is as good as that of the province of Quebec. I have not had a chance to see what he has to say yet.

In any event, all of these need to be heard. I look forward to those hearings, and I will listen intently to what my other colleagues in this House have to say on this important bill. But I also would remind other members what my learned friend from Pickering-Scarborough had to state, and I hope he's listening intently to me: that the really important job will be done not so much in the debate that's taking place now, but in the job that is done in committee, when we listen to all aspects and make the bill that was the dream of the member from Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock into a reality and we start going out there to save lives and make the streets and highways of Ontario safer.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott):** Questions and comments?

1750

**Mr. Phil McNeely:** I will start off by describing my conversion on the road to Damascus. I know you would realize that this is a very, very busy thoroughfare and there's a whole new perspective on this bill now. When the member for Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock brought this in, she was very convincing, but she wasn't sufficiently convincing that day on the environmental part. So we've done a lot of good work on that. I certainly want to congratulate the minister for bringing



this in quickly. I think it's an extremely important bill. This bill is so much better than what we saw earlier.

I think part of my enlightenment on this whole bill occurred during the campaign, when I so handily won the election in Ottawa-Orléans. I think that had a lot to do with it. I know that the member across was down to my riding a few times to see how well we campaign in Ottawa-Orléans. I think that was part of this change.

I think we have to look at this bill as being extremely important. I think the member for Beaches-East York says it very well, that we have to look at the whole speed limits. If we go back to when OPEC was putting the squeeze on North America with oil, there was a reduction in the speed limit in the United States to 55 miles per hour, which is about 85 kilometres per hour. They don't have the courage to do that today, but I think we have to look at that when we think of our environment, when we think of our climate change plans and when we think of what we want around us.

This is very important. It's very nice to see all three parties agreeing that the bill is important. The truckers brought it forward. They brought it forward to the member who brought in the private member's bill. It's a good bill and I'm glad to see such support for it.

**Mr. Robert Bailey:** I'd like to commend the member for Beaches-East York for his remarks. I enjoyed hearing the remarks about the just-in-time delivery. I also live on a border city; my riding is Sarnia-Lambton. That is the St. Clair River, not the "Detroit River at Lake St. Clair." The honourable member for Beaches-East York had that right. I'm sure that's what he was referring to. He was thinking of Sarnia-Lambton. It's hard to forget about Sarnia-Lambton when you're in the chamber.

I heard the honourable member for Ottawa-Orléans say that he thought that one of the reasons that helped him on the road to Damascus and his change on this bill was the election victory back in October. I never thought about that, but I had an election victory back in October too, and maybe it was part of this bill. I think it must have been the influence of the member for Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock that added to that too. I never really thought about that aspect of it, but maybe it did.

I also think that we need to look at just-in-time delivery. As the member brought up, that forces the transportation industry, and the drivers who are affected by it, to oftentimes have to go out there and try and meet unreasonable schedules. Sometimes they're affected by things beyond their reach: incidents such as 9/11—God forbid we have another incident like that—or crashes on the highway, on the 402, the 401. Our 400-series highways often can cause backups and put people behind the eight ball. As he said, they no longer have storage on-site in factories, so it does cause a lot of issues. Something I was surprised to learn from him was about the number of times a product crosses the border, in car parts or things like that—very interesting.

It's always interesting what you can learn in this Legislature. You can learn about election victories and

about how bills are affected by those as well. I look forward to a spirited debate as the evening goes forth.

**Ms. Andrea Horwath:** I have to say that one of the things the member for Sarnia-Lambton forgot is that you learn about the transformation machine that goes on in the Premier's office.

Nonetheless, my remarks are in reference to the member for Beaches-East York. Of course, he brought a number of issues to the table. I think they were appropriate issues that needed review; certainly, the issue of just-in-time delivery and how this bill will affect the industry in that regard, acknowledging the fact that there are many, many pieces to the trucking industry.

In fact, coming from Steeltown in Hamilton, I was surprised to learn that just-in-time delivery is becoming an issue for steel companies as well, which is quite interesting when you think about the size and complexity of those kinds of foundries and those huge operations. Just-in-time delivery is something that I've heard in regard to that particular industry, which is something that I was really quite surprised about nonetheless.

Also, the issue about whether or not the speed itself should be set out in the bill, in the language of the legislation, as opposed to leaving it to a reg: I think that is a very important issue, and I think it not only speaks to the idea that this government is claiming that much of this bill has to do with climate change—and if that's so, then the commitment to that needs to be ingrained in the legislation, not something in a reg that can be easily changed or amended, perhaps in the wrong direction, by this government or another government in the future.

That, of course, brought up the whole issue of whether this bill does enough in terms of an integrated strategy for climate change, unlike what they've done in Quebec, which is something that this government should turn its eye to, with regard to a more fulsome climate change strategy.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott):** Questions and comments? I'll return to the member for Beaches-East York, who has two minutes to reply.

**Mr. Michael Prue:** I'd like to thank my colleagues from Ottawa-Orléans, Sarnia-Lambton and Hamilton Centre for their comments. I really want to say that I am pleasantly surprised tonight to hear that they actually listened to portions of the speech. All of them commented on things that were actually said and on what I was trying to get across.

The member from Ottawa-Orléans, though, did speak about his conversion on the road to Damascus. I always like those Biblical allusions. I wish I had been there to witness it, even if it was during the height of an election campaign in the Ottawa area—to see the giant sword in the sky and him falling to the ground and coming up a changed man, because it would indeed have been a sight. I'm just trying to picture it in my mind—a sight to behold. I thank him for his comments and for listening to what I had to say.

The member from Sarnia-Lambton talked about just-in-time delivery. We all need to be aware that this is



becoming almost universal, in terms of people not wanting to put things into storage, not wanting to move it, limiting the amount of workers. If you only have one worker loading the truck and one person unloading the truck, then you don't have a whole warehouse operation and all the costs involved, which is why they're doing it. But it has also put the truckers at increased risk in trying to meet time frames which are sometimes very difficult, and we have to be able to work with industry to do that.

My colleague from Hamilton Centre also talked about that, but she also brought in the whole aspect of what is happening in Quebec and how they are marrying this to an environmental standard, which I believe we need to do in the province of Ontario.

I thank you all for your comments.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott):** Thank you very much.

Pursuant to standing order 37, the question that this House do now adjourn is deemed to have been made.

*Second reading debate deemed adjourned.*

## ADJOURNMENT DEBATE

### TOBACCO CONTROL

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott):** The member for Parry Sound—Muskoka has given notice of his dissatisfaction with the answer to a question given today by the Minister of Small Business and Entrepreneurship—was it today or was it last week?

**Mr. Norm Miller:** Yesterday.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott):** I apologize—concerning assistance for convenience store operators with new regulations.

The member has up to five minutes to debate the matter, and the minister or the minister's parliamentary assistant may reply for up to five minutes. I recognize the member for Parry Sound—Muskoka.

**Mr. Norm Miller:** I'm pleased to be here for this late show. I'm sure that people watching are probably wondering what a late show is, and I'll just briefly explain that.

1800

I've now asked the Minister of Small Business and Entrepreneurship two questions twice, so that's four questions, about the assistance his ministry is providing for the small businesses, the convenience stores, that are adapting to new rules that are banning the retail display of tobacco products. I've asked four questions, and I've had inadequate responses.

In fact, he referred the first question to the Minister of Health Promotion. I'd like to point out that it's certainly not a health question. It's about assistance for these small operators. I'm completely in favour of all actions to reduce smoking in the province of Ontario. This is not a health question; it's a question about assistance to the

small business operators and the way this government has handled this situation.

The bill was introduced two years ago. The guidelines to implement the new rules came out in January 2008. They have to comply by May 31 of this year.

Picture yourself as a small business operator. You're busy running your store, you're trying to make a buck, and you get these new rules in January—just a few months to try to comply with them.

They're not simple. I'll give an example. Here's a description of what you have to do: "Retrofit devices that cover shelves with a top-hinge 'flip up' cover that closes automatically or immediately by gravity. These must be no larger than 30.5 cm in height by 61 cm in length, and must open one at a time." They go on and on about the restrictions required as to how you have to modify your store to be able to comply with regulations. Let's remember that every store is a little different, and it's not necessarily a simple thing to be able to meet these new rules. The guidelines just came out in January. They're very tricky for small operators to meet.

I note that Dave Bryans, the president of the Ontario Convenience Stores Association, points out that they weren't consulted on this.

"We weren't consulted," says Bryans. "The rules were written by health groups that don't understand how to run a convenience store." He went on to say that many of the stores just won't be ready because these regulations came out so late.

"Only half of Ontario's 10,000 ... store owners will be ready to comply with legislation banning the retail display of cigarettes, Dave Bryans, president of the Ontario Convenience Stores Association, said Monday, citing the 'impossible task' of ... new regulations set to come into effect at the end of May." Not only that; there is not a sufficient supplier of the actual cabinets required to display these cigarettes.

He goes on to say, "The agreed-upon covers will not be available for approximately 50% of the stores, as the final dimensions and decisions were not agreed upon until the end of January 2008, allowing only four months for compliance."

Even those completely in favour of these new rules point out that the government has been very slow to act. Michael Perley, director of the Ontario Campaign for Action on Tobacco, says, "These guidelines for how you do this were only brought out by the Ministry of Health Promotion in January, a couple of years after the law was brought in. Why it took so long is a mystery to everyone, and this has given a number of stores headaches understanding exactly how they do this." He makes the point very well.

Every store is different. The convenience store operators are concerned about the fines they will be under if they don't comply. Dave Bryans goes on to say, "We are concerned that the over 200 tobacco enforcement officers will use their heavy-hand-of-the-law approach on small business without any assistance or compassion for the timeline predicament we are in...."



"Our members understand the concept and want to comply."

The fines are up to \$10,000 for the first offence and \$150,000 for three or more for a corporation.

My question, now for the fifth time: What are you doing to assist the convenience store operators to meet the new regulations banning tobacco advertising? Why did you wait until January 2008 to provide guidelines when the legislation passed two years ago? Will you be flexible in your application of the new law to give business time to adjust? Can you answer me this time?

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott):** In reply, I recognize the minister's parliamentary assistant, the member for Hamilton Mountain.

**Ms. Sophia Aggelonitis:** I would like to thank the member from Parry Sound-Muskoka. First, let me just say that you represent a very beautiful area that I've been to many times.

I'm happy to respond again to the question that the member asked the Minister of Small Business and Entrepreneurship yesterday. There really are two parts to the question: one dealing with health care and one dealing with small business.

First, I'd like to say that this ban is about saving lives and reducing health care costs by preventing young people from starting to smoke and by helping smokers quit.

Smoking kills 13,000 Ontarians and costs our health care system \$1.6 billion each and every year. It is also the number one preventable cause of death in Ontario. That is why, in 2006, our government enacted one of the toughest anti-smoking legislations in Ontario. When the Smoke-Free Ontario Act was first read in this House on December 15, 2004, and was first introduced by my colleague the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care, he said:

"There's another component to this bill that deserves particular attention: our retail display ban. We have all walked into convenience stores and seen elaborate countertop displays promoting smoking precisely at the eye level of young children. Does anyone really believe that it is somehow acceptable for cigarettes to be mixed in with Twizzlers and hockey cards for the benefits of young consumers?"

Our government is doing all we can to protect the health and well-being of Ontarians. That is why, effective May 31, 2008, the retail display of tobacco products will be banned. The ban is about saving lives and ensuring that the next generation of Ontarians do not pick up the habit of smoking.

The second part regarding small business: We have been working with our partners to ensure a smooth transition of the display ban, including the Ontario Convenience Stores Association and the Ontario Korean Businessmen's Association. As part of the small business community, convenience stores play a vital role as the backbone of this economy. Small businesses make up 99% of Ontario's businesses and account for more than half of Ontario's jobs. Small and medium-sized busi-

nesses in Ontario also generate approximately \$230 billion in economic activity.

I would like to take a moment to recognize Ontario's hard-working convenience store owners, who devote their time and energy to providing convenient products at convenient times for the people of Ontario on an ongoing basis.

Small businesses in Ontario contribute to innovation, investment and job creation in every part of the province. Convenience stores are especially important to job creation as they alone employ over 100,000 people, and we thank them for this contribution.

The Ontario Convenience Stores Association recognizes that we are listening to their concerns and are working with them. In fact, the president of the Ontario Convenience Stores Association did send a letter, and part of it was read yesterday in this House. He writes:

"I would like to take this opportunity to briefly thank you for all the help and support that you, your cabinet colleagues and the Premier have given to Ontario's independent family-run convenience stores.... As I have said in the past, all OCSA members will comply with the Smoke-Free Ontario Act."

We are working with our partners and we have been working with them for the last two years, and they are preparing for this ban. We will continue to work with our partners until the ban becomes effective on May 31, 2008. Since January of this year alone, public health officials have visited 5,500 tobacco vendors, informing them and talking with them about our display ban.

We are committed to promoting and protecting the health and well-being of all Ontarians.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott):** That concludes the first adjournment debate.

## TOBACCO CONTROL

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott):** Pursuant to standing order 37, the member for Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock has given notice of her dissatisfaction with the answer to a question given by the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services concerning the collection of cigarette taxes from the smoke shop located on government-owned property on Argyle Street in Caledonia.

I'm pleased to recognize the member for Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock.

1810

**Ms. Laurie Scott:** My reason for this request, pursuant to standing order 37(a), is that I'm unsatisfied with the answer received to the question I posed yesterday in the House to the Minister of Revenue, who then sent the question over to the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services.

**Mr. Robert Bailey:** Dodged and weaved.

**Ms. Laurie Scott:** Dodged and weaved again.

The question related directly to the Minister of Revenue's responsibilities, and I quoted from the Minister of Revenue's news releases in the Legislature



here and referred to the Minister of Revenue's public website. The question was certainly not out of the minister's realm of responsibility to answer. It's relating to a vendor operating on government-owned land, selling illegal cigarettes to children and young people and not collecting or claiming their share of tobacco taxes.

In the Ministry of Revenue, there are no less than 17 members who are employees who get paid salaries well over the \$100,000 list. Their job titles are focused on tax appeals, tax revenue collections, tax advisory, tax avoidance specialists. So she has a large group of people working for her that could have supplied the answer.

Why she didn't answer the question, I don't know. I hope it's not a trend for new ministers, that they avoid the questions and pass them off to other ministers.

Is there any coincidence the member from Parry Sound-Muskoka just did the late show? He wasn't happy with the question to the minister of small business and he asked for the late show there.

In the past two weeks, both myself and my colleagues have asked a number of questions with respect to the no-smoking laws, as well as the regulations and the effects on small business. We provided clear examples of where there are serious violations for those regulations—no response from the government on addressing these issues, which is why we're here tonight. We've heard excuses, unrelated statistics and rhetoric, mostly from the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services.

The reason for my question to the Minister of Revenue yesterday, along with my colleague from Thornhill, was to clarify: Is there a double standard? We're asking, is there a double standard when it comes to enforcing the Ontario revenue regulations?

Her own ministry lists numerous examples of revenue officers seizing illegal tobacco products, including fines to convenience store owners and vendors across Ontario for not filing the proper taxes on the tobacco products they sell. Yesterday, she couldn't pass the question off fast enough. The Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services quoted all these statistics again that didn't have any relation to the question.

My question is, why is the Minister of Revenue allowing an illegal smoke shop selling illegal cigarettes to young people without identification? It's a hazardous product. They're not paying their fair share of provincial tobacco taxes. They're operating on government-owned property. It's unbelievable that they are—an illegal smoke shack operating on government-owned property.

**Mr. Robert Bailey:** Say it isn't so.

**Ms. Laurie Scott:** It is so; close to both an elementary and a secondary school. Where's the minister of infrastructure renewal on this? He's responsible for the Ontario Realty Corp, the crown land. There are quite a few ministers involved here. No one's answering the question. Is the vendor, is the owner of the illegal smoke shop actually paying rent to the taxpayers of Ontario? Because Ontario Realty Corp, the province, owns the property.

On April 3, I asked the first opposition question ever to the Minister of Health Promotion. She's the minister responsible for this health promotion, a children's Smoke-Free Ontario Act. We've spent millions of taxpayers' dollars on this.

She was asked the question—lots of posters, but “Do as I say, don't do as I do,” is it? Yes, I think so. That would be the term. So duck and pass the buck is the theme that has gone through here, in not answering the questions. Thirty per cent of cigarettes sold in this province are illegal, amounting to about \$600 million a year that the government should be taking in taxes.

The Minister of Health Promotion refuses to protect young children in places like Caledonia from the evils of smoking. The Minister of Revenue refuses to ensure that the smoke shop on crown land selling illegal tobacco products to young people without proper identification—she refuses to have those products seized and ensure that a vendor is paying proper taxes, like the thousands and thousands of hard-working, law-abiding convenience store owners and business owners in this province. Add to this that you have the minister of small business, who never ceases to be out in left field on this entire issue. He refuses to stand up for these small businesses and the double standard that they are faced with.

Let me quote a recent article in the Cornwall Standard Freeholder with respect to the question from my colleague from Thornhill last Thursday—I guess I can't because I'm out of time, but my point has been made.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott):** I recognize the member for Ottawa Centre to reply.

**Mr. Yasir Naqvi:** I want to thank the member from Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock for her comments.

Our government is committed to combating the problem of illegal cigarettes. Since October 2003, Ontario has taken many steps to attack illegal, contraband cigarette sales, including the Tobacco Tax Act. Convictions under that act doubled between 2005 and 2007.

Over the past two years, Ministry of Revenue investigators have seized 28 million contraband cigarettes, 177,000 untaxed cigars and large quantities of fine-cut tobacco.

In reality, our government strengthened enforcement against contraband tobacco in our 2004, 2006 and 2007 budgets and, if passed, our 2008 budget. Both parties sitting opposite voted against increasing enforcement by voting against our budgets.

The role of the Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services, through the Ontario Provincial Police, is to ensure that the community and its residents are safe. In fact, last week, near North Bay, in one instance alone, the OPP confiscated—

*Interjection.*

**Mr. Yasir Naqvi:** If the member opposite is not going to hear the answer, then I don't know why we're doing the late show, so I'll go back.

Last week, near North Bay, in one instance alone, the OPP confiscated 15,000 cartons of cigarettes, valued at \$450,000; and the week before that, the OPP seized



\$410,000 worth of contraband cigarettes in two stops along Highway 401.

Don't tell us that the OPP isn't doing its job. Our government is proud of the work being done by the fine women and men of the OPP.

It is nevertheless true that our government does not interfere with the operational decisions of the OPP or any other police service in Ontario. We take the recommendations from the Linden report very seriously. We are very clear on recommendation 71: The minister's role is clear-cut and "does not include directions regarding specific law enforcement decisions in individual cases." All members of this Legislature are fully aware of this well-established division between public policy and operational matters.

We have full confidence in the police across the province, and we would hope that the opposition shares this confidence.

Let me remind the members that it is the primary responsibility of the federal government to protect Canadians from cross-border smuggling, including tobacco smuggling.

The RCMP and the Canada Border Services Agency are the two federal agencies responsible for matters related to cross-border smuggling.

The RCMP is the lead agency that manages Canada's international border enforcement teams known as IBETs. The OPP is a strong partner in the work of these teams, targeting cross-border criminal activity like tobacco smuggling. These teams enable law enforcement agen-

cies in the US and Canada to ensure that our borders are secure and open for legitimate business. These teams are a major enforcement success.

In addition, last week, law enforcement officials in eastern Ontario announced they are joining forces to crack down on speeders, contraband tobacco smugglers and impaired drivers on the region's roads and highways. This partnership will consist of the OPP, the Ministry of Transportation, the RCMP and the Canada Border Services Agency.

We know that enforcement and tax policies alone are not enough. We know that smoking cessation is key to long-term success. The McGuinty government has been aggressively implementing smoking cessation programs since taking office. The Smoke-Free Ontario Act has been hugely successful.

Our colleague Minister Best confirms that tobacco consumption in Ontario fell by 31.8% from 2003 to 2006. That equals over 4.6 billion fewer cigarettes.

Our government believes that reducing the demand for tobacco is crucial. Although some people may be concerned about lost tax revenue from illegal cigarettes, our government is concerned about lost lives from all cigarettes.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott):** There being no further matter to debate, I deem the motion to adjourn to have been carried.

This House stands adjourned until 1:30 p.m. tomorrow.

*The House adjourned at 1819.*

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Barrett, Toby (PC)	Haldimand–Norfolk	
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Bisson, Gilles (ND)	Timmins–James Bay / Timmins–Baie James	
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Brown, Michael A. (L)	Algoma–Manitoulin	
Brownell, Jim (L)	Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry	
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<b>Caplan, Hon. / L'hon. David (L)</b>	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal / ministre du Renouvellement de l'infrastructure publique
<b>Carroll, Hon. / L'hon. M. Aileen (L)</b>	Barrie	Minister of Culture, minister responsible for seniors / ministre de la Culture, ministre déléguée aux Affaires des personnes âgées
<b>Chan, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (L)</b>	Markham–Unionville	Minister of Citizenship and Immigration / ministre des Affaires civiques et de l'Immigration
Cheadle, Ted (PC)	Halton	
Colle, Mike (L)	Eglinton–Lawrence	
Craitor, Kim (L)	Niagara Falls	
<b>Crozier, Bruce (L)</b>	Essex	Deputy Speaker, Chair of the committee of the whole House / Vice- Président, Président du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Cvelanec, Bob (L)	Mississauga–Streetsville	
Chilton, Vic (L)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Dickson, Joe (L)	Ajax–Pickering	
DiNovo, Cheri (ND)	Parkdale–High Park	
<b>Dombrowsky, Hon. / L'hon. Leona (L)</b>	Prince Edward–Hastings	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales Minister of Labour / ministre du Travail
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Elliott, Christine (PC)	Whitby–Oshawa	



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Gélinas, France (ND)	Nickel Belt	
<b>Gerretsen, Hon. / L'hon. John (L)</b>	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les Îles	Minister of the Environment / ministre de l'Environnement
<b>Gravelle, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (L)</b>	Thunder Bay–Superior North / Thunder Bay–Superior-Nord	Minister of Northern Development and Mines / ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
Hampton, Howard (ND)	Kenora–Rainy River	Leader of the New Democratic Party / chef du Nouveau Parti démocratique
Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	
Hillier, Randy (PC)	Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington	
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Helena Jaczek, Dave Levac, Shafiq Qadri,  
Khalil Ramal, Laurie Scott, Peter Shurman  
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Assemblée législative  
de l'Ontario

Première session, 39<sup>e</sup> législature

# Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

# Journal des débats (Hansard)

**Wednesday 16 April 2008**

**Mercredi 16 avril 2008**

Speaker  
Honourable Steve Peters

Président  
L'honorable Steve Peters

Clerk  
Deborah Deller

Greffière  
Deborah Deller



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## LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 16 April 2008

## ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 16 avril 2008

*The House met at 1330.  
Prayers.*

### MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

#### ORANGEVILLE SWEET ADELINES

**Ms. Sylvia Jones:** Today, it is my pleasure to stand in the Ontario Legislature to acknowledge a tremendous accomplishment by the Orangeville Sweet Adelines, in my riding of Dufferin-Caledon. On April 12, the Orangeville Sweet Ads won first place, division AA, at the regional competition in Syracuse, New York, for a mid-sized chorus. To win the medal, their two performance numbers were *How Many Hearts Have You Broken* and *I Never Meant to Fall in Love*.

The Orangeville Sweet Adelines' medal is particularly special, because the region they compete in is considered one of the most competitive in the world. Chartered in 1981, under Sweet Adelines International, the group has participated in 24 competitions, but this past weekend was the first time they've risen to the very top.

The group competes with 53 dynamic women under the direction of Pat Vipond. Pat has directed the Orangeville Sweet Adelines since this group was formed, and her energy and leadership must be acknowledged as exceptional.

I'm very proud to congratulate the Orangeville Sweet Adelines for achieving this wonderful accomplishment. If you've never had the opportunity to hear a Sweet Ads chorus, you are missing a unique opportunity to hear excellent barbershop harmony performed by the very best. On April 12, in Syracuse, no one did it better than the Orangeville Sweet Adelines. Congratulations.

#### POVERTY

**Mrs. Amrit Mangat:** Last week, I had the opportunity to participate in a bus tour organized by the United Way of Peel Region. This tour gave me the opportunity to see first-hand the challenges facing Peel as it tries to address the needs of an exploding population that is becoming increasingly ethnically diverse. In fact, more than half of the constituents in my riding of Mississauga-Brampton South are immigrants.

The challenges facing communities like Peel motivated our government to take significant steps toward reducing poverty and improving the quality of life of Ontario

families. In our budget, we have proposed \$135 million to provide better dental care for low-income families, \$32 million to double funding for the student nutrition program, \$1.5 billion in skills and training, increases to Ontario Works and ODSP rates, increasing the Ontario child benefit to \$600 annually per child this year, and we have recently increased the minimum wage.

I'm very proud to be a part of a government that is choosing to address poverty and support social services in Peel. I would like to thank the United Way of Peel and its volunteers for not only hosting the bus tour but also for being on the front line in our war against poverty in Peel.

#### SERVICE ONTARIO

**Mr. Norm Miller:** I rise in the House today to thank the staff and administration at Rowanwood retirement home in Huntsville for the evacuation of the home, which was engulfed and destroyed by fire on Sunday, April 13. Of the 56 residents, only four were hospitalized for observation and treatment of smoke inhalation. The remainder of the residents are staying at Hidden Valley Resort in Huntsville. I would like to thank the fire services of Muskoka for their speedy response to the emergency, as well as Muskoka Victim Services, the town of Huntsville and residents of Muskoka for their support.

These residents have lost all their possessions, including personal items and government identification. It is a very trying time for them. What I find really odd is that Service Ontario's mandate doesn't allow staff to do more than provide forms to get birth certificates and health cards to these seniors. Apparently, under this government's watch, two and a half years ago the Service Ontario mandate changed: no more hands-on help. Staff are not allowed to help the public fill out forms or file them online. Instead, they may only refer them.

Yet again, this government is more interested in covering its backside than really helping its tax-paying citizens. There are people across this province who cannot read, do not speak English or French, are too ill to complete forms or don't have high-speed technology. These Ontarians need your help. Apparently that doesn't matter. The government's direction is clear: referrals only. Maybe it's time to change the name from Service Ontario to "referrals only Ontario."



## CARDIOPULMONARY RESUSCITATION

**Ms. Sophia Aggelonitis:** I had the opportunity to help launch an exciting program that will teach high school students in Hamilton the life-saving skills of CPR. The program is a joint initiative between our government and the Advanced Coronary Treatment Foundation of Canada. Through the ACT high school CPR program, students will bring information about heart disease prevention and a heart-healthy lifestyle to their current and future families. They learn how to react in an emergency by calling 911 and administering CPR.

I am proud to support a program that gives youth the skills to save lives at home and in our communities. The program is establishing CPR in high schools across Ontario. Students in Hamilton join more than 700,000 Ontario youths who have already been empowered to save lives. In Hamilton we have 20 participating schools, and we plan on training over 4,400 students per year. According to an Ontario pre-hospital advanced life support study, eight in 10 cardiac arrests occur at home, and citizen CPR can improve survival rates by almost four times. By empowering youth with CPR training, we are helping to increase the citizens' response rate around the province.

Our government is committed to strengthening local level programs that deliver opportunities to make our communities safer for fellow citizens. As we move toward creating a sustained focus on health promotion in the province, the McGuinty government will continue to work with our partners—

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Thank you.

## ONTARIO PROVINCIAL POLICE

**Mr. Garfield Dunlop:** I'm pleased to rise in the Legislature today to make a few comments on the OPP presence in the community of Caledonia. The Caledonia conflict has now been going on for just over two years, and each and every step of the way the OPP have become the meat in the sandwich for this government. The OPP have taken criticism in Caledonia—criticism they do not deserve. Shamefully, for over two years we have not seen a visit by the Premier or by the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services to support the OPP in Caledonia.

The OPP presence in Caledonia has taken close to \$50 million out of the OPP budget. OPP officers have spent close to 100,000 officer days at Caledonia. Due to these expenses, both financial and with the shifting of resources, services in other areas of the province are being stretched to the limit. We know that this government has taken a "Don't worry, be happy" approach to Caledonia, and tens of millions of dollars per year will continue to flow.

With that in mind, the Progressive Conservative caucus is calling on the McGuinty government to step up to the plate now. Using the federal 2,500 officers program beginning this year, 2008-09, we should add 1,000 new

officers in Ontario over a five-year period. That would allow the OPP an additional 100 officers per year and 500 additional OPP officers at the end of five years.

It is now time for the McGuinty Liberals to assist the OPP and give Commissioner Fantino and his officers the resources they need to work with. The OPP are tired of being the meat in the sandwich at Caledonia for this government.

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## HUMAN RIGHTS

**Ms. Cheri DiNovo:** Members of the Tibetan community are on a hunger strike at Queen's Park as I speak. You see, they don't see Tibetan human rights as a challenge that needs to be discussed with the perpetrators of the abuses, as the Minister of Trade would have it, or trade missions undertaken while their monks and relatives back in Tibet are being murdered and imprisoned as just business as usual.

Neither do they understand a Premier who states that human rights is a federal responsibility and only discusses it or reveals trade missions when the glare of the world media is upon him. They don't condone a Premier who refuses to admit the press when meeting with trade delegations from China. Refusing freedom of the press is what the Chinese government has done to Tibet.

Tibetan Ontarians have three demands: that the borders of their own country be open to journalists; that the political incarceration and murder of Tibetans cease; that the Chinese government meet with His Holiness, the Dalai Lama.

Why won't the Minister of Trade and the Premier of their own province, Dalton McGuinty, ask the Chinese consul and the Chinese government to meet these modest demands? Why don't the Premier and the Minister of Trade care about Tibetan human rights?

## ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

**Mr. Khalil Ramal:** I rise in this House today to speak about a wonderful event that I took part in with my good friend Minister Bentley this past weekend at White Oaks Mall in London called Think Global: Act Local. This event showcased many different companies and groups in the London area that are doing their part to limit their ecological footprint and help others become environmentally friendly.

Mr. Bentley and I had the chance to meet and speak with our constituents and raise awareness of the many ways that we can do our part and reduce waste. The companies and organizations at this event were handing out many energy-saving and environmentally friendly items such as evergreen seedlings and energy efficient light bulbs. The bulbs will, on average, save \$50 in hydro costs in the lifetime of the bulb and reduce 315,000 kilograms of CO<sub>2</sub> and other greenhouse gases. By using these bulbs, we are reducing 1,400,000 kilowatt-hours of energy used.

I would like to take this time and thank Mr. Hans Schiff from London Hydro for donating the light bulbs. I would also like to thank Mrs. Harper, a teacher from my riding. I had the pleasure of presenting her with a basket of evergreen seedlings to plant trees at their school and help do their part to make London a cleaner and greener city.

### MUNICIPAL INFRASTRUCTURE

**Mr. Joe Dickson:** I rise in the House today to highlight how this government's municipal infrastructure investment initiative, or MIII, will be helping municipalities in my riding of Ajax-Pickering build stronger and more resilient foundations for the future. The MIII will let communities decide where they need help to renew essential infrastructure.

As you know, the McGuinty government announced \$300 million for MIII last fall and then added an additional \$150 million to help meet the response that was met. Together with municipal contributions, the total MIII investment in local infrastructure improvements exceeds \$676 million.

I was quite pleased when I heard that in my riding the town of Ajax received \$655,350 for the construction of Millers Trail North and that the city of Pickering will receive \$1 million for the expansion of the Pickering Recreation Complex. This will also be a great benefit to my good friend and colleague from Pickering-Scarborough East. Because the town of Ajax and the city of Pickering are being provided with the funding now, they can get these projects under way for the upcoming construction season.

I know I'm not the only one in the House who is pleased with the MIII. Because of this funding, there are 101 new roads and bridges; 600 new water and sewer plants; 42 projects involving community centres, libraries and arenas; and 40 other projects all across the province. These will create jobs.

It is with this kind of smart, sound investment that this government will continue to ensure Ontario's communities—

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Thank you.

### AGRI-FOOD INDUSTRY

**Mrs. Maria Van Bommel:** I am pleased to speak about a very important event that is taking place here today. It's the fourth annual Premier's summit on agri-food.

We are once again bringing together leaders from across Ontario's agri-food industry to continue a dialogue on the challenges and issues facing this sector. The theme of this year's summit is Buy Ontario, and participants are discussing the opportunities for producing, processing and marketing local food to Ontario's consumers.

With the recent budget announcement of \$56 million over four years for the Pick Ontario freshness strategy,

the McGuinty government will continue our commitment to meet consumer demand for fresh, Ontario-grown food.

With the innovation, creativity and unique partnerships that have been established and nurtured over the past four years at the Premier's summit, we will continue to build awareness among Ontario's consumers of the broad range, high quality and freshness of Ontario products.

A highlight of the summit is the Premier's awards for agri-food innovation. These awards are part of a \$2.5-million, five-year program that recognizes innovators who contribute to the success of Ontario's food economy.

On behalf of Minister Dombrowsky, I would like to invite all members of the House to join us for a reception with our agri-food stakeholders, beginning at 3:45 in room 247, where you can expect to find some really great Ontario-grown food. Remember: Local is the new global.

### TABLING OF SESSIONAL PAPERS

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** I beg to inform the House that I have laid upon the table the 2006 annual report of the Chief Election Officer of Ontario, and the report on the election returns with statistics from the record of the 2007 provincial general election.

**Mr. Gilles Bisson:** Did I win?

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** You're here, aren't you?

**Mr. Gilles Bisson:** Oh, okay.

### REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

#### STANDING COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** I beg to inform the House that today the Clerk received the report on intended appointments dated April 16, 2008, of the standing committee on government agencies. Pursuant to standing order 106(e)(9), the report is deemed to be adopted by the House.

*Report deemed adopted.*

#### STANDING COMMITTEE ON ESTIMATES

**Mr. Tim Hudak:** Pursuant to standing orders 59(a) and 60(a), I beg leave to present a report from the standing committee on estimates, on the estimates selected and not selected by the standing committee for consideration.

**The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Tonia Grannum):** Mr. Hudak, from the standing committee on estimates, presents the committee's report as follows:

Pursuant to standing order 59, your committee has selected the estimates (2008-09) of the following ministries and offices for consideration:



Ministry of Economic Development and Trade, seven hours;

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Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs, eight hours;

Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, 10 hours;

Ministry of Northern Development and Mines, five hours;

Ministry of Research and Innovation, seven hours;

Ministry of Labour, eight hours;

Ministry of Energy, seven hours and 30 minutes;

Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, seven hours and 30 minutes;

Ministry of Finance, 10 hours;

Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities, five hours;

Ministry of Public Infrastructure Renewal, seven hours;

Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing; eight hours.

Pursuant to standing order 60, the estimates (2008-09) of the following ministries and offices not selected for consideration are deemed passed by the committee and reported to the House in accordance with terms of the standing order and are deemed to be received and concurred in:

Ministry of the Attorney General, 3.01—ministry administration.

**Interjection:** Dispense.

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Dispense? Agreed.

Pursuant to standing order 60(b), the report of the committee is deemed to be received and the estimates of the ministries and offices named therein as not being selected for consideration by the committee are deemed to be concurred in.

*Report deemed received.*

#### STANDING COMMITTEE ON JUSTICE POLICY

**Mr. Jeff Leal:** I beg leave to present a report from the standing committee on justice policy and move its adoption. It's dealing with Bill 16, An Act to amend Christopher's Law (Sex Offender Registry).

**The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Tonia Grannum):** Mr. Leal, from the standing committee on justice policy, presents the committee's report as follows and moves its adoption:

Your committee begs to report the following bill as amended:

Bill 16, An Act to amend Christopher's Law (Sex Offender Registry), 2000 / Projet de loi 16, Loi modifiant la Loi Christopher de 2000 sur le registre des délinquants sexuels.

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Shall the report be received and adopted? Agreed.

*Report adopted.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** The bill is therefore ordered for third reading.

#### INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

##### DAY NURSERIES

##### AMENDMENT ACT, 2008

##### LOI DE 2008 MODIFIANT

##### LA LOI SUR LES GARDERIES

Mr. Lalonde moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 60, An Act to amend the Day Nurseries Act to allow more children to be cared for in rural areas / Projet de loi 60, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les garderies afin de permettre que des soins soient fournis à un plus grand nombre d'enfants dans les régions rurales.

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

*First reading agreed to.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** The member for a short statement?

**Mr. Jean-Marc Lalonde:** The bill provides that persons legally entitled to care for children without a licence under the act may care for as many as three additional children during after-school hours without being in breach of the licence requirement of the act, if the premises where the children are cared for are—

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Thank you. I just remind the members once again that on the introduction of bills, it is to be a short statement. The issue of dealing with the detail of the bill is best left for private members' business. But I will work with the Clerk's table to provide clarification for everyone on the introduction of bills.

#### MOTIONS

##### HOUSE SITTINGS

**Hon. Michael Bryant:** I move that, pursuant to standing order 9(c)(i), the House shall meet from 6:45 p.m. to 9:30 p.m. on Wednesday, April 16, 2008, for the purpose of considering government business.

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour will say "aye."

All those opposed will say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

*The division bells rang from 1354 to 1359.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** All those in favour will rise one at a time to be recorded by the Clerk.

##### Ayes

Aggelonitis, Sophia  
Albanese, Laura

Crozier, Bruce  
Delaney, Bob

McNeely, Phil  
Milloy, John

Arthurs, Wayne	Dickson, Joe	Mitchell, Carol
Balkissoon, Bas	Duguid, Brad	Moridi, Reza
Bartolucci, Rick	Duncan, Dwight	Naqvi, Yasir
Bentley, Christopher	Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Pendergast, Leeanna
Best, Margaret	Gerretsen, John	Phillips, Gerry
Bradley, James J.	Gravelle, Michael	Ramal, Khalil
Broten, Laurel C.	Hoy, Pat	Sandals, Liz
Brown, Michael A.	Jaczek, Helena	Smith, Monique
Bryant, Michael	Kular, Kuldip	Smitherman, George
Cansfield, Donna H.	Kwinter, Monte	Sorbara, Greg
Caplan, David	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Van Bommel, Maria
Carroll, Aileen	Leal, Jeff	Watson, Jim
Chan, Michael	Levac, Dave	Wilkinson, John
Colle, Mike	Mangat, Amrit	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Craitor, Kim	Matthews, Deborah	Zimmer, David

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** All those opposed?

**Nays**

Arnott, Ted	Hudak, Tim	Ouellette, Jerry J.
Bailey, Robert	Jones, Sylvia	Prue, Michael
Bisson, Gilles	Klees, Frank	Runciman, Robert W.
Chudleigh, Ted	Kormos, Peter	Savoline, Joyce
DiNovo, Cheri	MacLeod, Lisa	Shurman, Peter
Dunlop, Garfield	Marchese, Rosario	Tabuns, Peter
Elliott, Christine	Martiniuk, Gerry	Wilson, Jim
Gélinas, France	Miller, Norm	Witmer, Elizabeth
Hardeman, Ernie	Miller, Paul	Yakubuski, John
Hillier, Randy	Munro, Julia	
Horwath, Andrea	O'Toole, John	

**The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller):**  
The ayes are 51; the nays are 31.

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** I declare the motion carried.  
*Agreed to.*

**STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY  
AND RESPONSES**

**SEAT BELTS**

**Hon. James J. Bradley:** I rise in the House today to raise awareness about a very important day that is of interest to all of us. Today is the launch of our annual spring seat belt campaign, which runs until April 27.

Earlier today, I had the great pleasure of attending a kickoff event where I was joined by many of Ontario's road safety partners, parents and caregivers, who are doing their part to help keep our roads among the safest in North America. Included in that group was Sergeant Cam Woolley of the OPP.

Road safety does not just happen. It takes commitment and determination from our community partners, road safety advocates and government.

With more than 93% of us buckling up, Ontario is ranked fourth in Canada for seat belt usage. This is above the national average. This is good news, but we must do more to reach out to those who are not getting the message.

Just over 30 years ago, Ontario was the first province to make seat belts mandatory. Since then, many road safety measures have been introduced to keep our families and communities safe. The McGuinty government introduced our one person, one seat belt law, which

requires every occupant in a motor vehicle to buckle up properly.

We made child booster seats mandatory and require all children under the age of eight to be safely secured in their child car seats every time, no matter how short the drive is.

We targeted drinking drivers by increasing sanctions for repeat offenders and enabling the courts to seize vehicles from people who continue to drive drunk.

We cracked down on street racing and stunt driving.

We are protecting police while in the line of duty on Ontario roads by making their vehicles more visible, especially at night.

As of January 1, 2008, we require every school bus to be equipped with a safety-crossing arm. We have made sure that the owner of any vehicle that illegally passes a stopped school bus faces charges, regardless of who is driving at the time.

And we've increased several fines for drivers who do not obey the laws.

These are just some examples of our government's action that demonstrate our commitment to improving road safety.

Unfortunately, traffic collisions kill nearly 800 people each year in Ontario—nearly one third of those killed were not wearing seat belts. Ontario's annual spring seat belt campaign is a great opportunity to get our message out and to remind drivers and passengers to buckle up.

This year, as in the past, we are reminding parents and caregivers to make sure their child safety seats and booster seats are properly installed. We know kids are safer in child car safety seats and booster seats, yet more than 10% of children under the age of eight who are involved in a fatal collision were not protected by a seat belt, child car safety seat or booster seat.

Child car seat inspection clinics, such as the one I attended this morning, and similar sessions across Ontario, help keep our kids safe. Campaigns are taking place around the province to safeguard not only us, but our most important asset—Ontario's children.

Our government will continue to work closely with child and road safety advocates to help spread the word that seat belts, child safety seats and booster seats save lives.

As the warmer weather approaches, let us all remember to take a few minutes to make sure everyone is buckled up and safely secured, so that we all reach our destinations.

I'm confident that every member of this House wants to improve road safety all year round. In fact—if I may deviate momentarily from the text of this—one thing that I have noticed in my time in the Legislature is that when members come together on an issue, one of the areas we see that happening in most often is in traffic and road safety. I commend all members of the House for being part of this in one way or another.

So let us all take this message with us, and help spread the word: Buckle up. It's the law.

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Responses?



## SEAT BELTS

**Mr. Frank Klees:** On behalf of the PC caucus, I want to express our support for the spring seat belt campaign. As the minister indicated, we are all in support of doing whatever we can do to improve road safety.

I want to also give credit to the support that has been given to this annual campaign by the partners: the Ontario Safety League, St. John Ambulance and, of course, the police services across the province.

Cam Woolley was mentioned—always a strong spokesperson for road safety. I want to give very special credit to the York Regional Police, who, for the last number of years, have taken this very seriously and have launched a very strong seat belt campaign every spring.

I want to also share with the House the results of that campaign for 2007, and I want to challenge not only the people of York region but residents across the province to improve on those compliance results that we have a record of today.

In York region for 2007, the results from Markham, Vaughan and Newmarket were 94% compliance. For King, East Gwillimbury and Richmond Hill, it was 95%. For Whitchurch-Stouffville and Georgina, it was 97%.

I am pleased to say, as the representative for Aurora, that Aurora's compliance rate was 98%. So while I want to congratulate my constituents for their compliance rate, I want to speak to those 2% who are not yet complying. I want to encourage them to get with the program and, as the minister said, buckle up.

I want to speak, however, to the Attorney General. I want to say to him that all reports that I have from Newmarket court, which I am told is ground zero for non-processing of tickets because of a lack of resources in that courthouse—I'm told that tickets that have been issued for seat belts are bargained out in most cases; they are never enforced.

In fact, where an individual has two or three charges, in most cases it was the seat belt tickets that were bargained out of the process. This is a serious problem. I want to ask the Minister of Transportation to have this discussion with his colleague the Attorney General and ensure that our courts are properly resourced.

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The minister made reference to a number of pieces of legislation that have been introduced to improve school bus safety. We support that. What we don't support, however, is the fact that the government has failed to properly fund transportation within our school system. So I speak to the Minister of Education, and I ask her to take this issue seriously. The Minister of Transportation has recently completed a safety blitz in which 12 school buses were pulled off the road for non-compliance with safety standards. On the one hand, we have to improve compliance; on the other hand, it comes down to the funding priority of this government. Our school bus operators want to comply, and we have been hearing for many years that the lack of funding is making it impossible for many operators to maintain their buses to the

standards that are demanded. At this point in time, we call on the Minister of Education to do her responsibility—and she's not listening. She has her back turned to me at this point. Clearly, she doesn't consider it a priority.

The fact is, if, as the minister stated, we in this House consider road safety a priority, this is where the priority of this government should be. Ensure, members of cabinet, that the proper resources are allocated to the Minister of Transportation so that she can transfer the appropriate funding to school districts across the province and envelope that funding to make sure that it's not then bargained away within the school board to other areas that are shorted by the Minister of Education. That's the official opposition's position.

## SEAT BELTS

**Mr. Gilles Bisson:** I always look forward to a statement from the Minister of Transportation, who is also one of the deans of this Legislature. He said something at the end of his presentation that I have to agree with, and that is that all members of this assembly in all parties have always been four-square behind making sure that we make our roads safer. If it was an NDP government, a Conservative government or a Liberal government, everybody has taken that responsibility because we know in the end that we do what we have to do in this place. We can make our highways safer and save lives in the end, and that's what it's all about. I say to the minister, I agree with you on that point.

But I want to deviate a bit and talk about road safety, because I know that the minister knows well that yes, it's important that we wear seat belts, but when you're running down Highway 11 and it's full of potholes because it hasn't been paved because we don't have the money to fix that road, it's a pretty rough ride. I just say to the minister across the way, there are all kinds of roads, either provincial or municipal, that are not getting the funding that they need in order to make sure that they're maintained to the standard that this province has taken for granted for so many years. I say that under the watch of this government and under the watch of the previous government, road maintenance has really gone to heck in a handbasket when it comes to making sure that we make our roads safe.

**Interjection:** Heck in a handbasket?

**Mr. Gilles Bisson:** I couldn't say the other one.

**Interjection:** Hell in a handbasket.

**Mr. Gilles Bisson:** I couldn't say the other one, brothers.

**Interjection:** Hansard has it.

**Mr. Gilles Bisson:** There they go. I'm being heckled by the opposition. This is pretty good.

I just want to say that when it comes to municipal roads, there is a real problem. You know as well as I do that in St. Catharines, Timmins, Welland and places in between like Hamilton, municipalities are struggling. They're having a problem trying to fix the potholes in



their municipalities and doing what needs to be done in order to deal with the increasing traffic in our municipalities. Heck, in the city of Timmins, we now have traffic jams because of what's happening in the mining industry—not because the government has done something particularly well, but because the price of gold is \$1,000 an ounce. We have more car and truck traffic causing congestion on our roads. Cities across this province are struggling trying to figure out how they can maintain the roads and how they can deal with the issue of traffic.

But Minister, I want to say that you know I have the passion for making the bridges of Ontario safe. You know as well as I do that we have a real problem in this province, as we saw in the province of Quebec. If you don't do the work that needs to be done to maintain bridges, eventually it becomes an issue of public safety. I brought to the attention of this House and to you on a number of occasions this week the issue of making sure that we either upload the responsibility for maintaining bridges for communities under 100,000, such as Quebec has done, or we take the opposite approach and provide infrastructure funding so it happens.

You saw what happened in Latchford: The bridge fell. You saw what happened in Chatham. You saw what happened in the city of Timmins, with Highway 67. Those bridges basically failed. Why? Because we don't have the money to maintain them.

I say to the government across the way, you have a choice. You either do nothing, which is unacceptable—that's what's happening so far—or you say, "I'm going to give you the infrastructure dollars to make it happen." Your colleague sitting behind you certainly isn't doing that. Or you say, "I'm going to upload to the province the responsibility for maintaining bridges for municipalities under 100,000."

So I say to the minister across the way, yes, we agree: Buckle up is a good campaign and it will save lives. But at the end of the day, if you want to make our roads safer, it's also about maintaining a good road infrastructure, something that is desperately needed in this province.

*Interjection.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** No response to the response, Minister of Transport.

## VISITORS

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** I want to thank the members for their co-operation in the introduction of guests. We certainly welcome guests and we've streamlined the process, but I just ask, to keep the process moving along, that we hold our applause until the end, after I read all the introductions. Thank you.

On behalf of the member for Thornhill, welcome to the grade 5 class from York Hill elementary school. Today they were in the east and west galleries.

On behalf of the member for Beaches–East York, Mr. Nick Volk from Habitat for Humanity, in the west members' gallery.

Welcome, on behalf of page Adam Laskaris, his mother, Kathryn Laskaris, who's in the east members' gallery.

On behalf of the member for Simcoe North, Ms. Angela Lyons from Joyland Beach, in the west members' gallery.

On behalf of the member for Wellington–Halton Hills, welcome page Laura Shum's mother, Jane Shum, and her family friend George Chow.

On behalf of the member for Chatham–Kent–Essex, I'd like to welcome former MPP and member of the 35th Parliament, His Worship, the mayor of Chatham–Kent, Randy Hope.

Welcome our guests today to Queen's Park.

## ORAL QUESTIONS

### LEGISLATIVE REFORM

**Mr. Robert W. Runciman:** My question is for the Premier and it has to do with the rule changes. I know the Premier's counting on this being inside baseball, that the public won't understand or care, but we think they will understand that this is a very cynical move designed to further undermine the role of the opposition, to diminish the already diminished significance of private members' legislation, curtail the legislative process and further minimize or marginalize news coverage of this place.

Premier, the rule changes your majority plans to impose are an affront to parliamentary democracy. I ask you to stop this process and refer the issue to a legislative committee. Will you do that?

**Hon. Dalton McGuinty:** I am, of course, pleased to receive the question. You won't be surprised to learn that I strongly disagree with the perspective brought by my honourable colleague in this regard.

Let's understand what we're talking about here. We're talking about changing a part of the tradition that's been around here since 1893.

What we're proposing, specifically, is to expand our work hours by 35%. We're talking about expanding our private member opportunities by 50%. And we are all but eliminating evening sittings, which we think is in keeping with our desire to make this a more family friendly workplace. We think that represents progress.

1420

**Mr. Robert W. Runciman:** I think that response ties into my initial comments, that the Premier believes the public won't understand this issue or won't care, and that's by going on with the explanations he just provided, without knowing the facts. Those of us who operate and work in this place know the real facts. This government, in its usual heavy-handed, disdainful approach to the opposition parties, ignored not only our reasonable efforts at compromise but also a number of very solid options provided by the Clerk's office. This whole process was designed not to improve this place, not to make it family



friendly, not to bring the rules into the 21st century. No, it was designed for one purpose only: to make life easier for the Liberal government by eroding scrutiny and accountability. These changes are reprehensible, and I ask the Premier to halt the process and refer the question of rule changes to a legislative committee.

**Hon. Dalton McGuinty:** I had the opportunity earlier today to speak with a group of representatives of various farm organizations. I'm not sure I could ever muster up the courage to tell them that we are, as a sacrifice now, about to begin work in this place at 9 o'clock in the morning. In our original proposal, we talked about working on Fridays. They said no to that. They said, beyond that—

**Mr. Tim Hudak:** That's an embarrassment. How can you demean your members like this? You should turn around and apologize for that—

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** The member from Niagara West—Glanbrook will come to order. Premier?

**Hon. Dalton McGuinty:** The original proposal was that we sit on Fridays, and the opposition said no, and we agreed to that. We also proposed that we begin question period at 9:30 in the morning, and they also said no to that. So we've changed that to 10:45. They asked that we review this, and I think that's a good idea. We'll have a legislative committee review it during the course of the summer to make sure we have this right. Again, I think it constitutes real progress.

**Mr. Robert W. Runciman:** The Premier talks about negotiations and discussions; that's like the executioner talking to the prisoner: "How do you want to die? Is it electrocution or hanging?" There were no meaningful negotiations, just a hollow exercise designed to provide cover.

I want to say that this process is even more offensive because the Premier's party has taken advantage of the very sincere and genuine efforts of the member for Nepean—Carleton, a new MPP and young mother, attempting to make this place more family friendly. You've used her heartfelt concerns as a smokescreen to bring in harsh and arbitrary rule changes that not only do not benefit members with young families but make life more difficult and this place less attractive.

Premier, I ask you once again: Stop demeaning the members of this Legislative Assembly and refer this issue to a legislative committee.

**Hon. Dalton McGuinty:** I just don't see how starting work here at 9 o'clock in the morning is such a tremendous sacrifice. We only sit about 100 days of the year. If you consider the challenges faced by a family living in the 905, for example, where the parents have to work in downtown Toronto, I can tell you that they make some tremendous sacrifices for more than just 100 days of the year to come in to work. I think it's time for us to become more in sync with life at the beginning of the 21st century, I think it's more appropriate for us to work an expanded week where we work 35% more, and I like the idea of creating more opportunities for private members' initiatives.

## LEGISLATIVE REFORM

**Ms. Lisa MacLeod:** The government wanted me to speak, so here I am. I was prepared to give him the benefit of the doubt on making Queen's Park more family friendly—

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** The question is to—

**Ms. Lisa MacLeod:** The Premier, Mr. Speaker.

But this proposal is an insult to those of us who have been working hard, on a non-partisan basis, to make Queen's Park and politics more attractive to women raising children, particularly for those of us outside Toronto, which I would have expected he would know, supposedly coming from the city of Ottawa.

To the Premier: Why did your House leader ignore a unanimous call to create an all-party committee to make Queen's Park more family friendly, then go behind our backs and leak it to the press—cabinet-friendly, not family-friendly, changes to the standing orders?

**Hon. Dalton McGuinty:** To the House leader.

**Hon. Michael Bryant:** I want to thank the member for her question and for her important participation in this debate.

Just to remind the House, after the Premier wrote to the official opposition, the third party leader and the House leaders, the next day, the member for Nepean—Carleton said, "I'm encouraged that the government is thinking outside the box and looking at ways to make the Legislature more family-friendly." This is more debate, more private members' business, more scrutiny and opportunity for scrutiny after question period. I think that this is in the best interests of the Legislature, and we will let the debate here begin.

**Ms. Lisa MacLeod:** I noticed that the Premier wouldn't answer a woman's question, but might I remind—

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** I just ask the honourable member—when I made the comment yesterday about trying to bring civility to this, I directed it at all members. I just ask that we try and be conscious of the language we use.

**Ms. Lisa MacLeod:** It's just so hard, because they have accused me of wanting to be at home baking cookies. Then they decide to thump their chest when I ask a question, point fingers and raise their voices, and now they won't answer my questions.

But might I remind them, they lost four women last year? Marie Bountrogianni, Jennifer Mossop, Mary Anne Chambers and Judy Marsales decided not to run in this place again. The Premier knows he had unanimous consent, all-party consent, to make this chamber work in a better way so we could keep more women in this Legislature. Instead, we got a family-friendly plan that is not family friendly at all.

Will he put the all-party panel to work so we can correct his mistakes, get this right and truly make the Legislature more family friendly, not —



**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Thank you. The government House leader.

**Hon. Michael Bryant:** Well, it was certainly as a result of concerns expressed about the timing of when question period might start—originally it was proposed 9:30 a.m.—that we moved it to 10:45 a.m.

I don't understand what the member's objection to this is exactly and what it is exactly about this proposal that she objects to. Of course, that's the kind of thing that would be considered over the course of the summer, after this it would be—while it's being considered by the committee.

I would say to all members of this House that I realize it does involve some change here, and I realize every other standing order rule change involved significant and volatile debate. I look forward to having this debate in this House, as we are proposing more debate time, more private members' business, and normal-working-hour days and no more night-sitting fright nights.

**Ms. MacLeod:** I wish he had responded to the series of letters that I sent him requesting that this committee actually be struck and started, but he didn't. He chose not to; he chose instead to leak what he was planning to do to the press. That's where we always find things out.

This penalizes members who have children, who live outside the GTA, by limiting our commute options on Mondays and on Thursdays by giving a free pass to his cabinet, while the rest of us debate private members' business. We'll never know again because of the moving target which is their plan, this four days of inconsistencies and uncertainties.

Will they stand up? Will they work with the opposition so that we can truly make this a family-friendly place, rather than just listening to what they have to say a day later in the press? Will they stand up and do something about it and work with us? We'll work with them—

*Interjections.*

1430

**Hon. Michael Bryant:** I agree with the Hamilton Spectator. It said that the government "is on the right track in his proposed modernization of how business is done at Queen's Park. It's the sort of approach that's needed to work toward remedying the gender imbalance at the provincial level"—

*Interjection.*

**Hon. Michael Bryant:** These proposed changes—

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** The member for Niagara West—Glanbrook, I've warned you on a number of occasions. This will be your last warning. Thank you.

**Hon. Michael Bryant:** The editorial goes on to say, "The proposed changes are a small, but meaningful step in the right direction and could have a positive impact on the willingness of women to run for provincial office," says the Spectator.

This involves more debate time. That has to be positive. It involves more private members' business, and that has to be positive. It involves, in fact, more

opportunity for media and public scrutiny after question period before stories are filed, and that's—

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Thank you. New question.

## LEGISLATIVE REFORM

**Ms. Andrea Horwath:** My question is also for the Premier. The reality is that these changes to the rules governing the way this Legislature works are anything but family friendly. So my question to the Premier is this: How can you possibly call these rules family friendly when members, particularly from outside the Toronto area, will now have to come in for sure on a Sunday night to participate in Monday morning debate and cut short their time with their families? How can the Premier call this change family friendly?

**Hon. Dalton McGuinty:** Again, we're talking about the hours during which we sit when we sit for about 100 days of the year. Many other folks have got to get up and attend a place of work some 250 days of the year. We're talking about an initiative here that will mean more debate time; we're increasing it by 35%. We're talking about creating more opportunity for private members' initiatives, which we think will enhance the quality of public policy that comes from here. We're also talking about effectively eliminating night sittings, save and except for the final eight days of a session when the government could elect to hold sittings in the evening at that time. Again, I think that, overall, this will help us to have work practices that are more in keeping with the world around us. I think it represents real progress.

**Ms. Andrea Horwath:** The reality is that the very process leading up to these changes was anything but family friendly and anything but democratic. The family-friendly committee that was supposed to meet in a collegial way and talk about these issues never even met. I know, because I'm a member of that committee, and we have yet to have a meeting. Will the Premier now admit in front of this entire Legislature that the changes that are supposed to be family friendly and increase democracy in fact do the exact opposite?

**Hon. Dalton McGuinty:** We had originally proposed that we sit on Fridays. The opposition said no. I think there is good reason behind that, because it allows us to be in our ridings. We also suggested that question period should begin earlier in the day, specifically at 9:30 in the morning. There was opposition to that as well. So we said, "All right, let's extend it then to later in the morning, to 10:45." There was also concern about evening sittings. You may know, Speaker, that in the past—well, at this point in time the government has the option to elect to hold evening sittings at any time. We're now agreeing to restrict evening sittings so they can no longer take place except possibly during the last eight days of any one particular session. We think, again, that it introduces more stability. We think—

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Thank you. Final supplementary.



**Ms. Andrea Horwath:** The reality is that the most anti-democratic aspect of these rules changes is in fact the moving of question period to the 10:45 a.m. slot. The reality is, question period is the absolute, most important accountability mechanism in the British parliamentary system. That's the reality. It's not the debate; it's the question period.

Your changes, though, or the changes that this government is introducing, reduce the time for researchers and writers and staff to prepare opposition questions for question period. What could be more anti-democratic than that? Will the Premier admit that in fact these rule changes that are supposed to be family friendly are in fact family friendly to only one group, and that is the Premier and his cabinet?

**Hon. Dalton McGuinty:** Again, I can't accept that. I spent some considerable time in opposition myself, served as leader of the official opposition for an extended tour, and I can tell you that I just can't accept that you can't get up in the morning, find out what the latest news is, and if you want to pursue that, develop a line of questioning, get the facts necessary and prepare your arguments. I simply cannot accept that that cannot be done before 10:45 in the morning.

I said something at the outset which may have left the wrong impression. I don't want to take away from the important work that takes place outside this Legislature during non-legislative hours. We may be here for 100 days of the year, but I think the single, most important shared responsibility we have is to look after our constituents back in the ridings. But I think when we do sit, it's time for us to sit at more reasonable hours. We're talking about more debate time, more private members' initiatives and—

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Thank you.

### DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

**Ms. Andrea Horwath:** My next question is for the Premier as well, but it's on a different topic. Why is the McGuinty government refusing to hold a separate inquest into the March 2006 murder of eight-year-old Jared Osidacz at the hands of his violent father, who was a known and convicted perpetrator of domestic violence?

**Hon. Dalton McGuinty:** To the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services.

**Hon. Rick Bartolucci:** Listen, as a father and a grandfather, I can only imagine how tragic these circumstances are. I have to be perfectly honest, I want the family to find out the answers. I don't think there's a person in this House who doesn't want the family to find out all the answers. The chief coroner of Ontario has decided that there will be an inquest into the father's death, and all questions surrounding Jared's death will be explored.

I don't want to presuppose the findings of that, but I have to be perfectly honest with you: I think we should have confidence in this process, in this inquest and look at the recommendations.

**Ms. Andrea Horwath:** Back to the Premier: Bill 89 was passed unanimously in this Legislature 19 months ago, and it was supposed to guarantee Julie Craven standing at a stand-alone inquest into Jared's death, and we know that hasn't taken place. The Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services has the absolute power, and we know he does, to order an inquest into all of the systems that failed Julie and failed Jared. Will he call that inquest and do the right thing by this murdered child?

**Hon. Rick Bartolucci:** The member is correct: All sides of the House supported Bill 89. There's absolutely no question of that. The intent of the bill was supported by all three parties.

I trust the system. I trust that the inquest will be a thorough inquest. I look forward to the recommendations. I can only hope that the questions the family has are answered. And no, I'm not going to overrule a coroner's direction before the coroner has had the opportunity to hold the inquest. Certainly we all hope that the mother and the grandfather will have those questions answered with this inquest.

**Ms. Andrea Horwath:** Back to the Premier: Section 22 of the Coroners Act says that the minister can call an inquest on any matter, "Where the minister has reason to believe that a death has occurred in Ontario in circumstances that warrant the holding of an inquest...." Does this not warrant the holding of an inquest?

Every member of this place knows that having an inquest for Jared is the right thing to do. It's what this Legislature actually wanted when we all unanimously supported Bill 89, so shame on you if you're not prepared to do that.

Jared's mom and granddad are here today. Will the Premier do the right thing: Respect section 22 and have his minister do the right thing by this family and order that separate stand-alone inquest into Jared's death? Or is this government completely heartless when it comes to murdered children and victims of domestic violence?

1440

**Hon. Rick Bartolucci:** No, I'm not going to order an inquest at this time. We are going to allow the process to unfold. The chief coroner has certainly given assurance that all the questions into Jared's death will be answered. I look forward to the recommendations from that inquest. You know, I have to be perfectly honest with you: I have faith in the system. I don't know that we should be playing politics with this. We have a mother and a grandfather—

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Can I just ask—

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** This is the final warning to the member from Durham. Some of the comments that are coming out of your mouth are not acceptable to civility. The members may not be hearing them; I am hearing them. This is your final warning, and if you persist I will ask that you be escorted from the chamber.



**Mr. John O'Toole:** On a point of order: What I'm questioning is, the minister is saying, "To be perfectly honest—"

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** That's not a point of order. I just ask that you be cautious with your words. Minister?

**Hon. Rick Bartolucci:** I want to assure the mother and the grandfather that, if standing is granted, my ministry officials will do everything possible to work with you through the financial application so that there will be complete representation of the family's concerns.

### TOBACCO CONTROL

**Mr. Peter Shurman:** My question is for the Minister of Health Promotion. On both sides of this chamber, we recognize the importance of educating our children on the dangers of smoking; on this side, aboriginal children too.

In November 2007, the Canadian Convenience Stores Association commissioned a study through their We Expect ID program. It has been called the butt study, because researchers visited 55 schools and collected thousands of cigarette butts to analyze. In Durham, 28% of cigarette butts found around schools were illicit, it was 36% in Peel, with Mississauga as high as 44%, and in the minister's backyard here in Toronto, 23%.

Can the Minister of Health Promotion inform the people of Ontario why this government believes ignoring the ongoing sale of illicit cigarettes and the uneven application of the Smoke-Free Ontario Act is somehow beneficial to the health of our school children?

**Hon. Margaret R. Best:** I thank the member opposite for the question. As the Minister of Health Promotion, the part of the question relating to contraband and illegal cigarettes does not belong with my ministry, but I am going to address the issue relating to my Smoke-Free Ontario Act, which is aimed at all people in Ontario, including aboriginal people.

As many of you are aware, and I believe the member opposite is also aware, 13,000 Ontarians die each year from tobacco smoking. Tobacco smoking is the number one preventable cause of death in Ontario. Every year, tobacco smoking costs our province \$1.6 billion. That's why I was recently at an aboriginal youth summit talking to aboriginal—

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Thank you. Supplementary?

**Mr. Peter Shurman:** It would be nice to get a straight answer. The minister touts herself as a great guardian of Ontario's youth. She repeats this mantra daily. But under her watch, contraband cigarettes, without any government inspection, product testing or review, are finding their way onto our streets; it's a fact. These illicit cigarettes are often being sold for as low as a dollar a package to school children right out of the trunks of cars—no proof of ID, no questions asked.

This government cannot claim that the Smoke-Free Ontario Act is a success until it acts to eliminate these

illegal cigarette operations that are targeting school children in Ontario. When will this minister have this act fully enforced against all illegal operations and stop the illegal sale of cigarettes to Ontario's school children?

**Hon. Margaret R. Best:** I remind the member that this matter belongs with the Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services, and I will refer the question to him.

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** You should have referred it right at the moment. New question, please.

**Mr. Peter Kormos:** She needs an opportunity to answer.

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Do you choose to answer the question?

**Hon. Margaret R. Best:** Okay. I will go back. Yes, I will answer the question. As I said earlier, the issue relating to contraband cigarettes is not within the purview of the Ministry of Health Promotion; it is within the purview of the Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services. I am certain the member opposite is well aware of that. However, I am going to repeat: Within my ministry, we have increased by a significant amount the number of people who are benefiting from the programs that we have in this ministry to reduce smoking.

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Minister of Transportation, as I've made some comments about civility and language, this is your final warning as well.

### POVERTY

**Mr. Michael Prue:** My question is to the Minister of Children and Youth Services. The Interfaith Social Assistance Reform Coalition, also known as ISARC, is today having a forum entitled Eradicating Poverty in the 21st Century. Social assistance rates are at an all-time low in Ontario, tens of thousands of families languish on affordable housing wait lists, children go to school hungry and our First Nations families live in Third World conditions with little or no support from this government. At speech time, lip service was given to ISARC forum participants, but concrete solutions were glaringly absent. The Minister of Children and Youth Services claimed that some families got a 27% improvement in their benefits under this government. Exclusive of inflation, nearly every penny is federal money. Will the minister admit that any benefits that have accrued to these families have next to nothing to do with her ministry or the McGuinty government?

**Hon. Deborah Matthews:** The Minister of Community and Social Services, please.

**Hon. Madeleine Meilleur:** I'm very glad to answer that question. I think that this government has been listening to our partners in the community. Since 2003, we have made improvements to the betterment of children and their families. We have to remember: There are poor children in our communities because their parents are poor. We have increased social assistance since 2003 by 9%. The member from the opposition party may



comment, but they have nothing to be proud of from when they were in power.

**Mr. Michael Prue:** I will take it from this minister's answer that she is repudiating what her fellow minister had to say on 27%, because you have admitted that in fact it is 9%.

The minister has a lot of nerve—both of them, actually. I don't know of a single ODSP recipient or a family trying to survive on Ontario Works who you would fool with these answers. I don't know whether you fooled anyone in ISARC either. People in ISARC know you still claw back money from poor children. People in ISARC know your ODSP rate increases are less than inflation. People from ISARC know that there's no money in the budget for new housing. When will you and your government come clean and admit that any monies that have accrued to the poor people in this province are entirely from federal monies?

1450

**Hon. Madeleine Meilleur:** With the adoption of the Ontario child benefit, this clawback will stop this coming July. I know that the member opposite wants us to help only the children on social assistance, but we are doing more than that. We are helping all children, including those where the parents have very modest incomes. We will be helping 1.3 million children in Ontario and we will be investing a lot more than either of those two parties did when they were in power. So the low-income family will qualify and will receive monthly benefits, and on the housing side, we are improving also. We will work with our—

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Thank you. New question.

## WORKPLACE SAFETY

**Mr. Yasir Naqvi:** My question is to the Minister of Labour. All over the province of Ontario, construction cranes can be seen on busy construction sites building new schools, expanding hospitals and developing new community centres.

As you drive through my riding of Ottawa Centre, there are new commercial and housing developments in neighbourhoods like Centretown and Westboro welcoming new businesses and families to the fine city of Ottawa.

Minister, with all the development occurring in Ontario, safety on construction sites is always a concern. I know that the health and safety of Ontario workers is a top priority for this government. As we enter into the busy construction season, can the minister tell this House about how the Ministry of Labour is working to protect the health and safety of Ontario construction workers?

**Hon. Brad Duguid:** I want to thank the member for his interest in this area. It is indeed a priority for our government to improve the health and safety of workplaces right across this province, in particular when we talk about the construction sector.

I'm proud to say that since forming government in 2003, we have set ambitious goals to hire 200 new health and safety inspectors and to reduce injuries by 20%. On the hiring of the inspectors, I'm proud to say that we've reached our goal of hiring 200 new health and safety inspectors. I can also tell you that approximately a third of those health and safety inspectors are working very diligently in the construction area, improving the health and safety of construction sites right across this province.

I am looking forward to Monday. On Monday, I'll be speaking at the Industrial Accident Prevention Association's annual meeting, where I'll be reporting the results of our initiative to reduce injuries in this province by 20% by the year—

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Thank you. Supplementary.

**Mr. Yasir Naqvi:** I want to thank the minister for that information and to commend him and the ministry staff for the excellent work they are doing to ensure that all workers in Ontario are in a safe working environment.

I have met with construction, labour and management groups in my riding on many occasions and I am impressed by their knowledge and level of commitment on the topic of health and safety.

Can the minister tell us how the Ministry of Labour works with the construction sector to improve health and safety throughout the province?

**Mr. Peter Kormos:** Don't be a dilettante, Brad. Praise the member.

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Member from Welland.

Minister of Labour.

**Hon. Brad Duguid:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

I want to say first and foremost, while we're proud of the progress we've made, much of that progress has been made due to the partnerships that have been formed: partnerships formed by members of safety committees across the province, by businesses, by business owners, by construction operators, and by labour, as well as the Ministry of Labour and our entire government. We're very, very proud of these partnerships, because it's these proud partnerships, these successful partnerships that have led to many of the successes we have seen over the last four years.

The Ontario Construction Secretariat indeed will be here in this Legislature this afternoon, hosting all members of this Legislature. So I invite all members to join them to discuss some of the very important issues to do with the construction industry. We all know this is an important sector in our economy, a sector that I think all sides of the House surely respect.

Working in partnership—

**Mr. Peter Kormos:** For God's sake, Brad, praise the member.

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** This is a final warning. The member from Welland, your tone has been a little loud today. This is a final warning to you.

New question.



## NATIVE LAND DISPUTE

**Mr. Toby Barrett:** To the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs: Last week, I faxed your office a letter addressed to you and I informed you of a potluck planned for the Ontario-government-owned Douglas Creek Estates in Caledonia. It's being held this coming Sunday, April 20, and some of my constituents are concerned that this type of event is provocative and would renew tensions between various groups. Haldimand councillor Craig Grice and resident Dave Brown just finished chronicling the past two years of mayhem at DCE this morning in the media studio.

I also made you aware that April 20 is the second anniversary of the OPP raid at DCE. Aside from the potluck, the agenda features the Oka raid of 1990, the Ipperwash raid of 1995 and a previous RCMP raid at Six Nations.

Minister, have you given the organizers permission to host this kind of event on Ontario government property?

**Hon. Michael Bryant:** I say to the member that it's a potluck dinner that he wrote me about. He has an objection to a potluck dinner taking place by members of Haudenosaunee Six Nations. I can tell you that the last time a potluck dinner took place on these lands, lands that the member knows very well are right now utterly vacant, members of the broader community, the town-folk of Caledonia, joined the members of Haudenosaunee Six Nations. The member tries to suggest that there's something integrally dangerous about a potluck dinner. I say to the member that I would respectfully disagree. It's a potluck dinner, for goodness' sake.

**Mr. Toby Barrett:** You've missed the subtleties of the question. The last time there was a potluck—that was October 15, 2006—all hell broke loose. Large gatherings were held at both Douglas Creek Estates and the Lions parking lot in Caledonia. Two days prior, your predecessor, then-Minister of Natural Resources Ramsay, had discussions with and wrote to the chief representative of the Haudenosaunee Six Nations. He informed them that the province had not provided permission for additional persons to be on the DCE site. He also urged the chief representative to find an alternative location for what they then called a picnic. Keep in mind that this is Ontario-government-owned property. It's taxpayers' land.

I'm asking you, Minister, have you written and urged the organizers—and the precedent has been set—to find an alternative location for this provocation, this potluck?

**Hon. Michael Bryant:** The alleged provocation is a potluck dinner. This is a gathering of people who bring food. The member seems to suggest that there's a level of protest activity taking place on those lands right now. That is not the case. The member would suggest, if you looked out at those lands, referred to in the community as the DCE lands, that all hell is breaking loose. Nothing could be further from the truth. Nothing offends the community of Caledonia more than this suggestion made over and over again, that this is some inherently dangerous place where dangerous activities take place.

I say to the member, he doesn't seem to support negotiations between Haudenosaunee Six Nations and the government. He doesn't seem to support a potluck dinner. Is there any doubt that people continue to think that this is the party consistent with the reports in Ipperwash—

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Thank you.

## SPORTS AND RECREATION FUNDING

**M<sup>me</sup> France Gélinas:** Ma question est pour la ministre de la Promotion de la santé. On Monday, North Bay city council passed a motion calling on the provincial government to provide dedicated funding for sports and recreation facilities and programs to promote physical activities. North Bay is supporting recommendations already sent to the minister by Parks and Recreation Ontario. Recognizing that this is a health promotion issue, North Bay has forwarded the motion to the Minister of Health Promotion. This is exactly what the NDP's Communities at Play proposal is calling for.

Does the Minister of Health Promotion agree with North Bay city council and with Parks and Recreation Ontario that her ministry must provide dedicated funding for sports and recreation?

**Hon. Margaret R. Best:** I would like to inform the member from the third party that, as the Minister of Health Promotion, I am very cognizant of the value of sports and recreation facilities. As well, as a person who learned to swim as an adult at a public school and had three children who went to school and learned to swim at a public school, I am well aware that school pools are things that we use for recreational activities.

This government has invested over \$136 million in 77 sports and recreational infrastructure-related projects. The member from the third party is well aware that the issue relating to school pools is within the Toronto District School Board's purview.

1500

**M<sup>me</sup> France Gélinas:** I was talking about a motion for North Bay. They don't have any pools in the schools in the north. There has been some money given out for sports and recreation, but those are one-time grants. Parks and Recreation Ontario has already recommended that the government make an immediate minimum investment of \$100 million to a dedicated fund for sports and recreation to promote physical activities. In Sudbury, Mayor Rodriguez also supported the NDP Community at Play proposal.

One of the cornerstones of health promotion is physical activity. Why won't the Ministry of Health Promotion live up to its name and provide dedicated funding for sports and recreation?

**Hon. Margaret R. Best:** The Ministry of Health Promotion has been involved in many different sports and recreational facilities development, and we continue to be involved in it.

In 2004, we established Active 2010, Ontario's sports and physical activity strategy. Our plan is to get as many



Ontarians active as possible, because we understand the importance of physical activity. In 2008 alone, we invested \$61.5 million in 29 sports and recreational infrastructure projects. We continue to invest in recreational projects. For example, in 2007 this government provided to the riding of Timmins–James Bay \$1.3 million toward swimming pool renovations, basketball courts and arenas.

## RESEARCH AND INNOVATION

**Mr. Mike Colle:** My question is for the Minister of Research and Innovation. Baycrest geriatric health care centre, one of the world's premier academic health science centres focused on aging, is located in my riding of Eglinton–Lawrence. Baycrest is not only leading the way in exceptional research and clinical triumphs, but it enhances the quality of life of our elderly and enriches the lives of our seniors. The researchers and doctors at Baycrest, some of the finest in North America if not the world, have requested that our government assist in the establishment of a new research Centre for Brain Fitness, that could transform how we look at aging and diseases such as Alzheimer's. I would like to ask the minister: What is our government doing to help make this centre a reality?

**Hon. John Wilkinson:** I appreciate the question. I don't think there's anyone in this House who doesn't have a loved one or a friend who in their later years develops, unfortunately, the tragedy of a neurological disorder as the result of aging. But the good news for Ontarians and for the world is that we have one of the finest research institutes in the world at Baycrest, right here in Toronto. I want to thank the member for Eglinton–Lawrence and so many other members of our caucus and from all sides who have decided that it would be worthy that we would invest some \$10 million of the taxpayers' money helping the good people at Baycrest deal with the tragedy of neurological disorders. Just think of a disease like Alzheimer's. They are coming up with innovative new approaches that will allow our doctors to quickly diagnose neurological disorders. That opens up whole new areas of treatment. In our ministry, we believe in making those 21st century investments to make sure that we can meet a growing global plague in regard to neurological disorders for our seniors, that we can do something about it and we can transform the lives of our loved ones.

**Mr. Mike Colle:** This investment in our aging population demonstrates our government's commitment to research and innovation as a means of building a stronger, healthier Ontario by improving our quality of life while producing new tools for diagnosis and treatment that we can market in the world. All over the world, people are coping with the mental effects of aging. The Centre for Brain Fitness at Baycrest will lead to major advances in our ability to identify and administer treatments. I'm very proud that innovations taking place at Baycrest will make

such an important contribution to science and the global economy and enrich the lives of Ontario's seniors.

Minister, can you please explain what the international economic spinoffs are of this investment at Baycrest?

**Hon. John Wilkinson:** In the 20th century, we learned how important it is for us to have healthy hearts. What they've decided or what they're leading us to at Baycrest is the importance of us having a fit brain, that through our life we have to do the same thing that we've done for our hearts, and that will be the transformation in the 21st century.

We've asked the good people at MARS, the medical and related sciences discovery district here in Toronto, to partner with the great researchers at Baycrest and to bring along that commercialization perspective. Why? Because of the aging baby boom, we have more and more people who will be plagued by these diseases, more and more of our friends, our parents and our grandparents who are looking for some hope that they will be able to be quickly diagnosed and that we'll be able to intervene and allow them to enjoy the quality of life.

There's nothing more tragic than to see a loved one who is not able to relate to their own family and friends. So we believe there actually is a global market, that in Toronto at Baycrest we can seize that opportunity—

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Thank you. New question.

## SCHOOL CLOSURES

**Mrs. Joyce Savoline:** To the Minister of Education: I take my role as opposition critic very seriously. In my house and in my career, when we make promises to our children and our community, we keep those promises. My comment is on the example the McGuinty government is setting by refusing to keep its promise to students across this province.

My question to the minister is, when will the students and their families of rural Ontario begin to benefit from your \$550-million announcement and stop heading toward closure and extinction?

**Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne:** Our promise to the children of Ontario is that we were and are restoring publicly funded education in Ontario from the desperate straits that it was in when we came into office in 2003. We have put more than \$4 billion into education. Money has been invested to keep rural schools open. We have a supported schools grant. We have a school foundation grant that guarantees that there will be a principal and a secretary in every school that a board deems viable.

We have 10,000 more students graduating from high school every year. We have 90% of our primary class sizes at 20 students or fewer, and we have students across the province doing, on average, 10 percentage points better on tests. Our literacy rates are up. And the students in Ontario and the people who work in our schools know that they have a government in Ontario that believes in publicly funded education.



**Mrs. Joyce Savoline:** Regardless of all the money that's being thrown at education, the truth is that this minister is firing teachers. It is not the previous government; this minister and the education Premier are firing teachers. Their termination is happening on the watch of the McGuinty government, which has been in power for five years.

The blame game is over. The truth is that the 90 teachers currently fired by the McGuinty government in the Peterborough area will be a drop in the bucket if the \$550 million that you promised rural communities doesn't arrive soon.

My question is, why does this government refuse to answer the question of when your government will send the \$550 million that you promised to rural schools?

**Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne:** This question about the \$550 million—we are committed to \$3.1 billion of investment in education over four years. Rural schools will get that money in the programs and initiatives that we put in place.

Let me talk about when the previous government was in office. Between 1998 and 2003, there was an increase in enrolment of 50,000 students. But do you know that in that period, with an enrolment increase, 500 schools closed across this province? We, on the other hand, are dealing with an enrolment decrease of 90,000 students, and yet we continue to invest in publicly funded education. Investment is up, test scores are up, class sizes are down, and we will continue to support publicly funded education in this province.

1510

### SCHOOL POOLS

**Mr. Rosario Marchese:** To the Minister of Health Promotion: I understand her ministry's responsibility is to promote health. The Malvern pool, and indeed all the pools in our Toronto schools, keep children physically active, swimming, and off the streets. For Toronto parents and grandparents, keeping pools open is a no-brainer. Yet for the minister, and indeed the Premier, it doesn't appear to be their problem or their responsibility. Minister, are parents missing something, or are you?

**Hon. Margaret R. Best:** To the Minister of Education, Mr. Speaker.

**Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne:** I think the member opposite, who actually was a member on the Toronto board of education, knows perfectly well that the building of swimming pools in schools is a municipal anomaly around the province. The fact is that swimming pools in municipalities around the province are not located in schools for the most part. There are a few, but those 28 pools outside of Toronto are managed by those school boards.

Since we came into office, this school board has received \$360 million a year more. There is a \$5.4-million grant, a program enhancement grant, that can be applied directly to sports programs, and it is a matter of this board looking at its priorities. I know, for example, there

are more than 90 schools that are not being used, that are not inhabited by kids, and those schools could be leveraged to provide capital dollars to help with the provision of those school pools.

**Mr. Rosario Marchese:** My question was to the Minister of Health Promotion, not to the Minister of Education, who used to sing a different tune when she was a school trustee. But today my question is still to the Minister of Health Promotion, whose job it is to promote health. School pools are part of that. It is the ministry's responsibility to protect the investments that have been made to make sure our population stays fit, healthy and out of local hospitals. If the Ministry of Health Promotion won't step in to keep schools open, why does it exist at all?

**Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne:** That song that I sang when I was a school trustee had the backdrop of a very different orchestra. That was the government on the other side of the House which was playing every discordant note that it could find on publicly funded education.

There is nobody in this Legislature who believes in physical fitness more than I do, or the member sitting beside me. It is our belief that we have provided the resources to the Toronto District School Board that it needs to manage its resources. I sincerely hope the Toronto district board of education looks at its priorities, works with the city of Toronto and makes sure that the assets that it needs to keep our kids healthy are kept in place.

### MUNICIPAL FINANCES

**Mr. Khalil Ramal:** My question is for the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. Yesterday's report from the Federation of Canadian Municipalities showed that more than 90% of the Canadians polled by the FCM said that municipal governments are underfunded. From that report, we also learned that Canadians think only health care is more important to them than helping cities and communities with their infrastructure.

My local mayor, Anne Marie DeCicco-Best of London, is a supporter of the Federation of Canadian Municipalities and a great advocate for building strong communities. My mayor and local councillors cannot fund municipal infrastructure alone. They need help from both the provincial and federal governments.

Would the minister tell me—

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Thank you. Minister?

**Hon. Jim Watson:** I just want to thank the member. I also, through him, want to thank the mayor of London, because Her Worship the mayor has done some incredible, positive work, particularly in the affordable housing file through the Federation of Canadian Municipalities.

I'm very proud, as a result of the effective London caucus in this Legislature, that the community of London has benefited to the tune of \$3.3 million in social housing repairs, \$11 million in the MIII fund for the innovation industrial park and \$5.8 to improve municipal roads and bridges. We're uploading the ODSP this year and, starting



next year, the ODB. That's going to save millions of dollars for the municipality of London. We're there to work in partnership with communities like London because we understand that the downloading of the previous government did hurt these municipalities. We're there to help.

**Mr. Khalil Ramal:** I appreciate what the minister has just told us. I know my constituents will be pleased with the investments that this government has made in London. It's going a long way in helping the city repair infrastructure, which we need badly.

But there is another level of government that can help our cities as well, and that's the federal government. That government has a role to play in building safe, strong communities in this province and across the country.

This FCM survey shows that Canadians would have preferred that the federal government invested in cities instead of cutting the GST from 6% to 5%. I know that our provincial government has partnered with the federal government before. I know that when we work together, we are better able to help municipalities.

**Hon. Jim Watson:** Thank you for the question. It's true: When governments are working together, great things can happen in communities across this province and across the country. Our government was proud to have signed the affordable housing program agreement with the previous federal government, which brought \$301 million into the province of Ontario. It has helped to create thousands of new affordable housing units and rent supplements.

Regrettably, the federal program starts to run out next March 31. All of my colleagues—provincial and territorial housing ministers—finally, after two and half years, got a meeting with the federal minister of housing two weeks ago in Gatineau, but we could not even get a commitment for a formal FPT meeting. We need the federal government at the table to help with affordable housing because this is a basic need in a civil society. We call on all members to contact their federal members of Parliament and tell them that housing is a priority—in London, Ottawa, Toronto and the north, throughout Ontario.

### CORMORANTS

**Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette:** My question is for the Minister of Natural Resources. Minister, the cormorant overpopulation, with a projected growth that could double every five years, is really devastating the fisheries and wildlife value throughout the Great Lakes basin because the managers cannot use all of the control techniques they have. I know that the previous government initiated a five-year study, which is long completed now, that should give the details to allow a more controlled atmosphere to take place.

Minister, will you commit to changing the designation of the cormorants under the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Act so they can be treated the same as agricultural pest birds such as crows, so that the fish and wildlife managers have the additional population control methods they need to control the cormorant population?

**Hon. Donna H. Cansfield:** The member has a really good point. The issue around the cormorant is very significant in this province. You're correct: There was a research study, and it is completed, and we're now going through the science of that.

Having said that, we're really quite prepared to look, concurrently with how we're dealing with the study, at how we manage the cormorants, who are currently having a negative ecological impact on other species, in particular fish. We also know it's having some challenges with vegetation.

We know we can deal with private landowners; they have the opportunity. The MNR is quite prepared to go on a site-by-site basis and look at that negative impact at the same time. Then we'll be able to review that science and be able to look at this in a more holistic approach, because one of our challenges is how to deal with the United States, because it's a migratory bird.

### VISITORS

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** I just want to take this opportunity to welcome some students from St. Joseph's High School in my home community of St. Thomas in the Speaker's gallery today. Welcome.

*Interjection.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Speakership has its privileges, Minister.

1520

### PETITIONS

#### POPE JOHN PAUL II

**Mr. Frank Klees:** On the occasion of Pope Benedict XVI's 81st birthday today, I want to salute him on behalf of all Ontarians. I also want to express publicly my gratitude for his support of my private member's bill, An Act to proclaim Pope John Paul II Day in Ontario, and I present these petitions:

"Whereas the legacy of Pope John Paul II reflects his lifelong commitment to international understanding, peace and the defence of equality and human rights;

"Whereas his legacy has an all-embracing meaning that is particularly relevant to Canada's multi-faith and multicultural traditions;

"Whereas, as one of the great spiritual leaders of contemporary times, Pope John Paul II visited Ontario during his pontificate of more than 25 years and, on his visits, was enthusiastically greeted by Ontario's diverse religious and cultural communities;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario to grant speedy passage into law of the private member's bill by Oak Ridges MPP Frank Klees entitled An Act to proclaim Pope John Paul II Day."

I'm pleased to affix my personal signature to these petitions.

## HOME CARE

**M<sup>me</sup> France Gélinas:** I have a petition from SEIU and the people of Barrie, Midland, Innisfil and Coldwater. It says:

"Whereas the Ontario government has continued the practice of competitive bidding for home care services; and

"Whereas the competitive bidding process has increased the privatization of Ontario's health care delivery, in direct violation of the Commitment to the Future of Medicare Act, 2004; and

"Whereas competitive bidding for home care services has decreased both the continuity and quality of care available to home care clients; and

"Whereas home care workers do not enjoy the same employment rights, such as successor rights, as all other Ontario workers have, which deprives them of termination rights, seniority rights and the right to move with their work when their employer agency loses a contract ..."

They ask this government:

"(1) to immediately stop the competitive bidding for home care services so home care clients can receive the continuity and quality of care they deserve; and

"(2) to extend successor rights under the Labour Relations Act to home care workers to ensure the home care sector is able to retain a workforce that is responsive to clients' needs."

I fully support this petition, and will affix my name to it and give it to page Bethany.

## ANTI-SMOKING LEGISLATION

**Mr. Kuldip Kular:** This petition is for children in smoke-free cars, supporting Bill 11.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas children exposed to second-hand smoke are at a higher risk for respiratory illnesses including asthma, bronchitis and pneumonia, as well as sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS) and increased incidences of cancer and heart disease in adulthood; and

"Whereas the Ontario Medical Association supports a ban on smoking in vehicles when children are present, as they have concluded that levels of second-hand smoke can be 23 times more concentrated in a vehicle than in a house because circulation is restricted within a small space; and

"Whereas the Ipsos Reid poll conducted on behalf of the Ontario Tobacco-Free Network indicates that eight in 10 (80%) of Ontarians support 'legislation that would ban smoking in cars and other private vehicles where a child or adolescent under 16 years of age is present'; and

"Whereas Nova Scotia, California, Puerto Rico, and South Australia recently joined several jurisdictions of the United States of America in banning smoking in vehicles carrying children;

"We, the undersigned, respectfully petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to approve Bill 11 and amend

the Smoke-Free Ontario Act to ban smoking in vehicles carrying children 16 years of age and under."

I agree with the petitioners, so I also put my signature on this petition.

## LORD'S PRAYER

**Mr. Jim Wilson:** I want to thank Trinity United Church in Beeton for sending me this petition.

"Whereas Premier Dalton McGuinty has called on the Ontario Legislature to consider removing the Lord's Prayer from its daily proceedings; and

"Whereas the Lord's Prayer has been an integral part of our parliamentary heritage that was first established in 1793 under Lieutenant Governor John Graves Simcoe; and

"Whereas the Lord's Prayer is today a significant part of the religious heritage of millions of Ontarians of culturally diverse backgrounds;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to continue its long-standing practice of using the Lord's Prayer as part of its daily proceedings."

I agree with this petition and I've signed it.

## ANTI-SMOKING LEGISLATION

**Mr. Jeff Leal:** I have a petition today for children in smoke-free cars, in support of Bill 11.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas children exposed to second-hand smoke are at a higher risk for respiratory illnesses including asthma, bronchitis and pneumonia, as well as sudden infant death syndrome ... and increased incidences of cancer and heart disease in adulthood; and

"Whereas the Ontario Medical Association supports a ban on smoking in vehicles when children are present, as they have concluded that levels of second-hand smoke can be 23 times more concentrated in a vehicle than in a house because circulation is restricted within a small space; and

"Whereas the Ipsos Reid poll conducted on behalf of the Ontario Tobacco-Free Network indicates that eight in 10 (80%) of Ontarians support 'legislation that would ban smoking in cars and other private vehicles where a child or adolescent under 16 years of age is present'; and

"Whereas Nova Scotia, California, Puerto Rico and South Australia recently joined several jurisdictions of the United States of America in banning smoking in vehicles carrying children;

"We, the undersigned, respectfully petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to approve Bill 11 and amend the Smoke-Free Ontario Act to ban smoking in vehicles carrying children 16 years of age and under."

I support this petition and will affix my signature to it.

## LORD'S PRAYER

**Mr. Ted Chudleigh:** I have a petition for the Legislative Assembly. I notice it's signed by Clive Whitlock,



who is the over-70 marathon champion of the world. He has run three or four marathons here and is an amazing individual.

"Whereas the current Liberal government is proposing to eliminate the Lord's Prayer from its place at the beginning of daily proceedings in the Legislature; and

"Whereas the recitation of the Lord's Prayer has opened the Legislature every day since the 19th century; and

"Whereas the Lord's Prayer's message of forgiveness and the avoidance of evil is universal to the human condition: It is a valuable guide and lesson for a chamber that is too often an arena of conflict; and

"Whereas recognizing the diversity of the people of Ontario should be an inclusive process, not one which excludes traditions such as the Lord's Prayer;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, ask the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to preserve the daily recitation of the Lord's Prayer by the Speaker in the Legislature."

I'm pleased to sign my name to it as page Laura comes and takes it.

#### DISABLED PERSONS PARKING PERMIT PROGRAM

**Mr. Michael A. Brown:** "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas there currently exist problems of exposure to theft and the weather when displaying a disabled person parking permit on a motorcycle while parked in a disabled parking space;

"We, the undersigned, petition our members of Parliament to promote the development of a special fixed permit, as proposed by the Bikers Rights Organization, for use by disabled persons who ride or are passengers on motorcycles, even if that requires an amendment to the Highway Traffic Act."

This is signed by Ontarians, often in the Welland, Fonthill and St. Catharines area of the province. I'm pleased to affix my signature and to send it to the table with page Victoria.

#### LORD'S PRAYER

**Mr. Gerry Martiniuk:** I have petitions provided to me by the Calvary Church of Ayr, the Cambridge Alliance Church and the Paroisse Sts-Martyrs-Canadiens, and it reads:

"Petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Premier Dalton McGuinty has called on the Ontario Legislature to consider removing the Lord's Prayer from its daily proceedings; and

"Whereas the Lord's Prayer has been an integral part of our parliamentary heritage that was first established in 1793 under Lieutenant Governor John Graves Simcoe; and

"Whereas the Lord's Prayer is today a significant part of the religious heritage of millions of Ontarians of culturally diverse backgrounds;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to continue its long-standing practice of using the Lord's Prayer as part of its daily proceedings."

As I agree with the petition, I sign my name to it.

1530

#### HOSPITAL FUNDING

**Mr. Joe Dickson:** "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Central East Local Health Integration Network ... board of directors has approved the Rouge Valley Health System's deficit elimination plan, subject to public meetings; and

"Whereas, despite the significant expansion of the Ajax-Pickering hospital, its largest in its 53-year history, a project that could reach \$100 million, of which 90% is funded by the Ontario government, this plan now calls for the ill-advised transfer of 20 mental health unit beds from Ajax-Pickering hospital to the Centenary health centre in Scarborough; and

"Whereas one of the factors for the successful treatment of patients in the mental health unit is support from family and friends, and the distance to Centenary health centre would negatively impact on the quality care for residents of Ajax and Pickering; and

"Whereas it is also imperative for Rouge Valley Health System to balance its budget, eliminate its deficit and debt and realize the benefits of additional Ontario government funding;

"We, the undersigned, therefore petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Rouge Valley Health System continue to provide the current level of service to our Ajax-Pickering hospital, which now serves the fastest-growing communities of west Durham; and

"That the Ajax-Pickering hospital retain the badly needed 20-bed mental health unit."

I will affix my signature to that and pass it to page Ida.

#### LORD'S PRAYER

**Mrs. Julia Munro:** "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the current Liberal government is proposing to eliminate the Lord's Prayer from its place at the beginning of daily proceedings in the Legislature; and

"Whereas the recitation of the Lord's Prayer has opened the Legislature every day since the 19th century; and

"Whereas the Lord's Prayer's message is one of forgiveness, of providing for those in need of their 'daily bread' and of preserving us from the evils that we may fall into; it is a valuable guide and lesson for a chamber that is too often an arena of conflict; and

"Whereas recognizing the diversity of the people of Ontario should be an inclusive process, not one which excludes traditions such as the Lord's Prayer;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, ask the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to preserve the daily recitation of the Lord's Prayer by the Speaker in the Legislature."

As I am in agreement with this, I have affixed my signature to give it to page Adam.

### HOSPITAL FUNDING

**Mr. Bob Delaney:** I have a petition to the Ontario Legislative Assembly that has been sent to me by people who live not merely in my home city of Mississauga but also in Oakville, Brampton and Toronto. It is addressed to the Ontario Legislative Assembly and reads as follows:

"Whereas wait times for access to surgical procedures in the western GTA area served by the Mississauga Halton LHIN are growing despite the vigorous capital project activity at the hospitals within the Mississauga Halton LHIN boundaries; and

"Whereas 'day surgery' procedures could be performed in an off-site facility, thus greatly increasing the ability of surgeons to perform more procedures, alleviating wait times for patients, and freeing up operating theatre space in hospitals for more complex procedures that may require post-operative intensive care unit support and a longer length of stay in hospital;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care allocate funds in its 2008-09 capital budget to begin planning and construction of an ambulatory surgery centre located in western Mississauga to serve the Mississauga-Halton area and enable greater access to 'day surgery' procedures that comprise about four fifths of all surgical procedures performed."

I agree with this petition. I'm pleased to affix my signature and to ask page Lucas to carry it for me.

### BREASTFEEDING

**Mr. Ted Chudleigh:** I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly.

"Whereas Health Canada, the Canadian Paediatric Society and the World Health Organization recommend exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months of life, with continued breastfeeding, along with other food sources, for up to two years and beyond for optimal health; and

"Whereas many Ontario health care services lack adequate resources needed to assist women to achieve success by the recommended, well-established timeline;

"We are asking the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to take a leadership role in ensuring the provision of adequate breastfeeding support for women in Ontario by:

"(1) creating a provincial breastfeeding policy in Ontario;

"(2) initiating a process whereby all Ontario hospitals become baby-friendly as per the WHO/UNICEF guidelines;

"(3) adequately fund health-care-providing organizations to properly train all health care providers working with new and expectant mothers in hospitals and community settings;

"(4) increase the number of both hospital and community-based clinics in Ontario; and

"(5) fund the creation of a provincial centre for excellence for breastfeeding, which would serve as a training ground for professionals, a centre of research and a fully functioning clinic accessible to all women who require assistance.

"Given the documented and well-known health benefits to our population and subsequent financial benefits to our health care system, it is irresponsible for our provincial government not to support and increase breastfeeding resources in Ontario."

I affix my signature.

### HOSPITAL FUNDING

**Mr. Joe Dickson:** I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the Central East Local Health Integration Network board of directors has approved the Rouge Valley Health System's deficit elimination plan, subject to public meetings; and

"Whereas it is important to ensure that the new birthing unit at Centenary hospital, a \$20-million expansion that will see 16 new labour, delivery, recovery and postpartum (LDRP) birthing rooms and an additional 21 postpartum rooms added by October 2008, this will not cause any decline in the pediatric services currently provided at the Ajax-Pickering hospital; and

"Whereas the significant expansion of the Ajax-Pickering hospital, the largest in its 53-year history, a project that could reach \$100 million, of which 90% is funded by the Ontario government—it is important to continue to have a complete maternity unit at the Ajax hospital; and

"Whereas it is also imperative for the Rouge Valley Health System to balance its budget, eliminate its deficit and debt and realize the benefits of additional Ontario government funding; and

"Whereas the patients and parents of Ajax and Pickering deserve the right to have their children born in their own community, where they have chosen to live and work;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Rouge Valley Health System continue to provide the current level of service; and

"That our Ajax-Pickering hospital now serves the fastest-growing communities of west Durham; and

"That the Ajax-Pickering hospital retain its full maternity unit."

I affix my signature to that and hand this to Bethany.



## OPPOSITION DAY

## ONTARIO ECONOMY

**Mr. Robert W. Runciman:** I move that, in the opinion of this House, the McGuinty Liberal government's failures to develop and implement effective long-range plans to ensure the economic well-being of Ontario have led the province to the brink of "have not" status and placed in jeopardy our ability to support cherished services such as health and long-term care, the environment, infrastructure renewal, education, transportation, tourism development, secure and affordable energy supplies, safe communities and agriculture.

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Mr. Runciman has moved opposition day motion number 1.

Mr. Runciman.

**Mr. Robert W. Runciman:** My comments are going to be rather brief. I think there are a total of—I won't get into the numbers, but a significant number of our members want to participate in this discussion.

The general intent of the motion is to draw attention to the Liberal government's ad hoc approach to governing, their failure to plan beyond a very abbreviated horizon and their wastefulness with taxpayers' money—in essence, their overall mismanagement, a failure of government that has short- and long-term costs for many of the services we cherish in this province, such as health care, education and the stewardship of our environment. In the brief time I have, I am going to mention just two examples.

In last month's end-of-year giveaways, we saw millions of tax dollars doled out to a lot of surprised recipients with very little rationale behind the decisions—only the direction to cash the cheque quickly. It seemed to be yet another Liberal pull-a-name-out-of-the-hat approach to spending as much as you can before the end of the fiscal year, with no rhyme or reason.

One of the projects that deserved recognition missed out on the hat draw for the fourth time, and as a result, a UNESCO world heritage site which the Minister of Municipal Affairs should be concerned about could suffer serious environmental damage. The sewage treatment plan in the village of Merrickville could, according to engineers, suffer a catastrophic failure at any time, resulting in significant pollution of the Rideau system. The Ministry of the Environment has expressed in writing its deep concerns with what appears to be, in their words, "an inevitable tank failure." Yet this critically important environmental project didn't have its name drawn in the Liberal lottery. That's because there was no priority list, no plan; just ad hockery. In this Liberal government's haste to shove taxpayers' money out the door before March 31—and, I stress, without plan or process—they are jeopardizing the environmental well-being of a world heritage site and, by extension, threatening the economic health of that area.

1540

Another example, on a different tack, is the deficit situation facing the Cornwall Community Hospital. Cornwall isn't alone, of course; we're hearing that approximately 75 hospitals in the province are facing deficits. The Cornwall situation can, once again, be ascribed to a failure to plan and to instead rely on short-term, one-off political fixes to get you through the next election.

The Cornwall hospital, given changing demographics, should have been the beneficiary of at least two initiatives that should have occurred but didn't. Number one is the change to the hospital's funding formula—long overdue. Number two is a provincial program that could alleviate the challenges and costs associated with alternative-level-of-care—ALC—patients occupying active treatment beds, creating a host of problems, including a plugged emergency room in Cornwall and cancelled surgeries.

The time is long overdue for the Liberal government to address the challenges facing the Cornwall Community Hospital through appropriate policy initiatives and long-term plans, but given their track record of seat-of-the-pants management and throwing money at the crisis of the day, we cannot, regrettably, be optimistic. We sincerely hope that the failure to act does not result in service cuts and job losses at the Cornwall hospital.

Those are just two examples of how the McGuinty Liberal government's failure to implement effective long-term, long-range plans is jeopardizing the economic well-being of our province and, as a result, services we all cherish. My colleagues will have further examples.

**Ms. Cheri DiNovo:** It's a pleasure to speak to the motion by the member from Leeds–Grenville and in fact the entire Progressive Conservative caucus.

For those watching from home, what's interesting is—and whether they're dedicated viewers of the government channel and watch proceedings in this House all the time or whether they're just channel-surfing and happen to catch this for a minute—I want to reiterate how critical the discussions are that happen in this chamber, how absolutely important these discussions are for the lives of real Ontarians.

Sometimes, as school groups come through here, they watch what's going on. It seems chaotic, it seems unimportant, but at the end of the day it's extremely important. At the end of the day, people's lives are dramatically affected by the decisions and the discussion and the discourse of this very chamber.

I know that viewers at home like it when I use metaphors from literature, so I'm going to use one. My metaphor today is the emperor's new clothes, because we have a government over here under Dalton McGuinty that likes to pretend that it's resplendently attired. In fact, the emperor has no clothes indeed.

For example, they like to pretend that this is a government—after all, they struck a cabinet committee to look at this issue—that's going to do something or has done something about the incredible scourge of poverty in our province. We have one in eight children living in



poverty now. As you heard the member from Leeds—Grenville, we're rapidly becoming a have-not province. This is the symptom of that: the levels of poverty that we have.

Today, ISARC came to this House—a group of leaders across faiths—and spoke about their concerns. Their concerns were housing, poverty and minimum wage. Their concerns are the same year to year. Every year they come beseeching this government to act and every year they go away empty-handed, just like the one in eight children go away empty-handed when they have dealings with this government. They heard, in no uncertain terms at that meeting today, that the poor today are worse off than they were under Harris-Eves—worse off in any measurable way.

The emperor of Dalton McGuinty and cabinet, which has no clothes, likes to pretend it is wrapped in the cloak of social justice. No such cloak wraps the administration of Dalton McGuinty. In fact, the paltry 2% increase that those who are permanently disabled—on Ontario disability—received is surely a slap in the face. It's an absolute insult. Those are among the poorest. So right now we have disabled Ontarians who cannot pay their rent or feed themselves under the empire of Dalton McGuinty.

Minimum wage: This government likes to say that it wants to act on poverty but it has to study the problem. Interestingly enough, jurisdictions around the world have acted on the problem. If we piled up all the studies that have been done around the poverty issue, we would have more housing than we have under Dalton McGuinty. This problem doesn't need to be studied any more; this problem needs to be addressed, needs to be acted on. As a housing activist said, "We don't need to be addressed; we need an address." That's what they need. Again, we have an administration that pretends to be dressed but isn't.

If they really wanted to raise the poor out of poverty, de facto all they need to do is to raise the minimum wage above the poverty line. They, of course, voted down my bill to do just that. But that minimum wage bill would have immediately taken a quarter of a million people out of poverty and also affected the 1.2 million in total who live on \$10 an hour or less—immediately change it. They would have reached their 25 in 5; no problem. Will they do it? Absolutely not.

Housing: We have had a budget that just came in with not one line item for new affordable housing. This is even more of a disgrace than it appears at first blush, because they have \$165 million worth of federal funds that they will lose if they don't get the shovel in the ground in the next year. Those funds will be taken back by the federal government. But instead, of course, we have a Minister or Housing who says, "Give us more."

Quite frankly, I would ask: Why should the federal government give you more money if you don't spend the money they already gave you? That's \$165 million they're going to lose, according to the Toronto Star editorial, unless they spend it within the year. We all know how long housing projects take to get going. This

is the end result of complete inaction for the last five years. Again, the emperor doesn't have leggings on, doesn't have a shirt, doesn't have a cloak; wears nothing. The emperor has no clothes.

But you have to give it to this administration, don't you? They are the masters of spin. They are the masters of the photo op. They are the masters of consulting rather than acting. If you ask a Liberal cabinet member about an issue, you get a consultation out of it, or you get a website. You get a website or a phone line so you can phone up to find out how little you actually might get from this government.

Another portfolio that I happen to have and cherish is the small business portfolio. When this government does decide to act—and that's rare, as we all know—it tends to do so at the expense of small business in this province. We've seen this time and time again. We saw a story that made great news, the Karl's butcher shop story, where red tape and regulation came crashing in on a business that had been in business for over 40 years. It had to put in \$200,000 just to renovate this store, even though the Toronto Board of Health said everything was okay. Did they know about the regulation? No, they didn't.

That's the way this government deals with small business. We know that retailers now are being asked to bear the brunt of changes in the tobacco legislation. Much as we think, "Absolutely, we should be doing everything we can to get teenagers in particular to stop or not start smoking," why can't this government come forward with the money to do that? Why can't they put their own ads in those spaces? Why can't they do something to help the small retailer?

**1550**

The business education tax: My resolution last year called for a reform. It hasn't been reformed. The business education tax is a huge burden for small business. Again, this government has done nothing.

We saw yesterday—and again, here's another instance of this emperor wearing nothing: the issue of swimming pools in Toronto. Ever since this government got in—do we remember the campaign promises of 2003, when the emperor, Dalton McGuinty, said that he would fix the funding formula? Well, guess what? Five years later, the funding formula is not fixed. One of the by-products of not doing what they were supposed to be doing and promised they would do is that now we're going to lose our swimming pools across the city.

We have 15,000 signatures; 15,000 people saying, "This emperor doesn't have any clothes on." Some 15,000 people signed and said: "Do something. You've got the money; spend it. Do something." We put forward our own program that the Ministry of Health Promotion could shoulder this, could save these swimming pools, and not only in Toronto, but health and recreation facilities across the province, whose infrastructures are crumbling, who are at the end their life spans. Again, will this government work, will they do something to address the needs of children when we know that a huge percentage of children right now are going to grow up obese with



type 2 diabetes and everything else? No, they'd rather spend the billions at the end of the story, and even then, of course, we know we live in a province where a million Ontarians go without access to a family doctor.

So again, for those listening at home and just tuning in, one feels always in the position of that little child saying, "I know the emperor says they're dressed; they're not dressed. They have no clothes on." We live in hope, in the opposition benches, that that little voice, that that one child—you know, interestingly, yesterday that child had a face and a name: Michaela. She came here; she sat in the members' gallery.

**Mr. John Yakabuski:** He called her "sweetheart."

**Ms. Cheri DiNovo:** Absolutely. She said, "The Premier came to my school, and he promised to do something about saving my pool"—a child's voice.

When the emperor, Dalton McGuinty, meets with the emperors from the Chinese delegation and they sit down and talk, I guess we should've had press there. If we had press there, maybe they would've caught on tape that particular McGuinty promise broken—in this case, to a child.

So children are starting to notice. Children are very wise. Have you noticed that? They're very wise. Children are starting to notice. Little children are noticing the emperor doesn't have any clothes. Children are starting to notice that this is an administration that does not keep its promises. We've seen this in the past, of course. It was very cute—Michaela said in the press conference, "Maybe I should have got it in writing." But unfortunately, in the opposition benches, we all know that even if you get it in writing that doesn't count for anything either with Emperor McGuinty across the way. One would hope you could trust the Premier, but children across this province are discovering they can't do that. They come now, and they say, "The emperor has no clothes."

What else? What else has this government said that it would do for Ontario? The promises are legion, of course, and the promises are, to a promise, broken. But if we continue along—and this is so much fun. Again, if you're just tuning in, please, take this seriously. We're having some fun in the opposition benches here, but take this seriously. This is your government, and they are breaking their promises to you. They are not acting in a crisis situation. It is a crisis situation. When 200,000 good manufacturing jobs are lost, it's a crisis. When one in eight children are living in poverty, it's a crisis. When one million Ontarians go without a family doctor, this is a crisis. When we are slipping into have-not status, this is a crisis. When not one line of this last budget mentions anything about new housing dollars—and I know what I'm going to hear from the minister of infrastructure and housing. I know what I'm going to hear already: "\$100 million." Well, actually, there's no \$100 million for new housing. That's for the repair of existing housing stock. It happens to be a third of what the Toronto-based Save Our Structures group asked for, a third of what's needed just to repair Toronto housing stock. But this is spread across the province so everybody will get a nickel or a

dime. This government is fond of doing that, announcing \$100 million, but when you spread it across the province, in whatever area we happen to be speaking about, it ends up not being much.

Housing—that's a crisis: 170,000 households waiting for affordable housing is a crisis situation. Again, what is the emperor doing? The emperor is marching down the street with no clothes on, and children are starting to notice. They are telling their parents, and their parents are telling other parents. As we saw, with 15,000 signatures, a lot of parents are starting to notice that what's said across the aisle here in this House is not what's done. What's spun is not what's done. This is a government that's heavy on spin and photo ops and websites and phone lines, but very, very light on action.

It's interesting. On Friday, I'm going to have the great pleasure and delight of flying with some members of Parliament down to Michigan to meet with His Holiness the Dalai Lama. Here is how bad it is, Ontarians, as you watch this; here's how absolutely naked this emperor is across the aisle: that the Premier could stand up in this House and say that human rights is a federal responsibility and not a provincial responsibility, as if human rights are not everybody's responsibility. When a Premier of Ontario stands up, turns his back on 4,000 of his citizens, turns his back on their human rights and says, "We're taking the lead of the federal government on this," abrogating his own responsibility, I would say we are in a crisis. This is a crisis, and this government has brought this crisis to a head.

So outside, while we're speaking in this chamber, we have a group of around 20 Tibetans who are on a hunger strike. They're not eating until the minister of trade comes back from her little junket to China. They are not eating because their relatives are dying. Their relatives back in Tibet are being arbitrarily arrested, are being murdered, and they can't find out about it. Why? Because the borders are closed to foreign journalists.

We asked this government, first of all, whether they were going to China or not. We had to—it's a crisis when you have to find out by scuttlebutt and gossip and rumour and innuendo when your government is going on a trade mission in the midst of human rights violations in Tibet. That's sad. It's more than sad; it's a crisis. The emperor McGuinty is naked. Like a rat hiding, they were flushed out into the open and actually had to admit what they were doing, because, of course, the press finally made them do it. When they actually had to admit what they were engaged in, then and only then—when their backs are to the wall, when 300 protestors are on the front lawn, then and only then do they do something. And then it's a wishy-washy little resolution, which, of course, we agreed to. It's better than nothing. It's better than nothing, which is what the Tibetans would have received had we not spoken up in the opposition benches.

This is a matter of basic human rights. So not only is this government not wearing any clothes when it comes to poverty, housing, small business, manufacturing, health, the environment—which I'll get to in a minute—



but basic human rights. They can't even stand up for their citizens' basic human rights.

1600

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath):** Excuse me. Can I just remind the member that the debate is about the opposition motion on the order paper?

**Ms. Cheri DiNovo:** Yes, Madam Speaker, certainly. I'm getting back to the opposition motion, which is essentially that this government has done nothing to help our economy and is plummeting Ontario into have-not-province status. I'm using as my metaphor—because it's fun, because it's real, because it's timely—the emperor has no clothes, which we all remember reading as children—that little child who points and says, “You know what? I know the emperor says they're wearing something, but they're not.”

This is a government of spin, and the spin says, “We're clad and we're righteous,” and of course they're not. They aren't.

To get back to the economic environment: This is a government that says, “We can't do much in Ontario because we are subject to global pressure.” You've got to love the emperor's line on that, right? “Not much we can do.”

“We can't raise the minimum wage.” That somehow has something to do with globalization.

“We can't build housing.” Somehow that has something to do with globalization.

“We can't bring in a Buy Ontario program.” Some of that's got something to do with globalization.

It ties very neatly into the fact that it's a federal responsibility for human rights, because it's never their responsibility—not for human rights, not for the upcoming recession, not for the loss of 200,000 manufacturing jobs. No, it's never their responsibility. It's always the federal responsibility or the global responsibility, never their responsibility.

I'm going to share, as I said, my time with the member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek, so I'm going to leave him some time. But let me just close, reminding people of how important this is and how important it is that this government act, and act now.

I used the metaphor of the emperor with no clothes for a reason. This is a majority government. That may not mean as much as it does to members on the opposition benches at home. What it means is that this government can do what it wants, when it wants. Boy, oh boy, they don't consult a great deal about that. We discovered that with the orders changes that were thrust upon us this morning. They can do what they want, when they want.

They have the opportunity, they have responsibility to act and they have the means to act on every single issue I addressed. So if they say they can't act, or not yet, or “We're going to consult,” that is them—picture it—not acting. That is them being the emperor; Dalton McGuinty, Emperor McGuinty, with no clothes on.

So, like Michaela said when she came in here, “The Premier made me a promise and he broke it.” Very simple child's words, right, Ernie? A child's words, very

simple, just like the child in the story the emperor has no clothes. It's spin; it's not substance. It's spin; it's not action. It's spin when Ontario is in a crisis.

With that, I'll leave some time for the member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek. Do stay tuned. Keep your members accountable. Ask your MPPs—wherever you are when you're watching—what they are doing now about poverty, what they are doing now about the loss of manufacturing jobs, what they're doing now about building new units of affordable housing, what they're doing now to alleviate the tax burden on small business; what they're doing now, not what they might do some day, because then you'll see just how naked they really are.

**Hon. Jim Watson:** It's a pleasure to participate in this debate. Obviously, our side of the House is not going to support the motion. We don't believe in the negativism of the official opposition. We have faith and confidence in not only the economy of this province, and this country, for that matter, but also the people.

I just wanted to bring members through a little bit of a history lesson, where we found ourselves as a government when we had the honour of being elected to this Legislature in October 2003. We all remember the \$5.6-billion deficit that we inherited. We also remember the mismanagement that took place before that, that got us to \$5.6 billion. We all recall that the government of the day swore up and down that the books were balanced.

In August, before the election, the finance minister, Ms. Ecker at the time, put out a press release and indicated that the books would be balanced. This was the budget—those of you following this on television will remember—that didn't even take place in the Legislative Assembly. They were showing their contempt for the Legislature and for elected MPPs and they held it in an auto parts factory.

We were also left with an infrastructure deficit. All of us who had the pleasure of serving in municipal government understand what happened during that period of time when the Conservatives were in office: the downloading that took place, that in many instances crippled small and large municipalities alike because the services that were thrust upon them were never revenue-neutral. I recall vividly at AMO Mr. Harris saying, “Pinkie swear,” this would be cost-neutral to the municipal sector. The Auditor General of Ontario in fact proved that it was never cost-neutral. The Conservatives could barely keep the lights on. You remember the chaos and the confusion surrounding hydro policy. They had more positions than a yoga instructor when it came to hydro. One day they were going to privatize; the next day they weren't going to privatize.

They created chaos in our school system. We lost over 25 million equivalent school days as a result of strikes in the public school system. Since our government has had the honour of taking office under the leadership of Premier McGuinty, we have not lost one school day to a teachers' strike in this province.



We all remember the sad track record of health care in this province under the previous government. It's a little rich to hear the Leader of the Opposition talk about cherished services such as health care when they closed 28 hospitals.

**Mr. John Yakabuski:** How many did you reopen, Jim?

**Hon. Jim Watson:** I can tell you the number of hospitals that we're reopening. We're opening a cancer centre at the Queensway Carleton Hospital; we have 100 projects around the province of Ontario that are taking place right now as we speak, because we recognize, with an aging society, with an aging population, that we need more health care, not less health care. Yet in the official opposition, the Conservative Party's stated plan is to take \$3 billion out of the health care budget in the province of Ontario. How can they possibly explain that: "We are going improve health care when we put less money into the health care budget"?

In my own home town of Ottawa, we lost the Grace Hospital, we lost the Riverside Hospital and they tried to close the CHEO cardiac unit. It was thanks to the member from Ottawa South, our Premier, who fought back, and we're not only saving the CHEO cardiac unit, we're expanding CHEO in the city of Ottawa. They tried to close the Montfort Hospital. *Tout le monde dans la ville d'Ottawa sait bien que l'Hôpital Montfort est très important non seulement pour les francophones dans la population de l'est de l'Ontario mais pour l'est de la ville d'Ottawa-Orléans—mes amis M. McNeely, M<sup>me</sup> Meilleur et M. Lalonde.* All of these members were out supporting Gisèle Lalonde and the SOS Montfort group. It was a court order that finally clobbered the head of the health minister over there and said, "You can't close the Montfort Hospital." So we're proud of the fact that we're investing record amounts of money in health care.

We're able to do this because the economy and the measures that we have taken have helped to produce over 450,000 net new jobs since we've had the honour of forming government. In fact, in the first quarter of 2008, 57,000 net new jobs have been created in the province of Ontario, a track record I am very proud of, and for those 57,000 people who have found work, they and their families are very proud of what they've been able to accomplish. We saw what happened with the reckless tax cuts that were funded entirely by debentures by the Conservative Party. Many of us remember getting those \$200 cheques, but do you know what? In exchange for the \$200, we got more debt on the provincial books, we got more property tax increases because of the downloading, because those costs were passed on to the municipal sector. That's why I am so proud to be the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing in Premier McGuinty's government, that in fact has started to upload costs—land ambulance, a 50-50 upload; public health, a 75-25 upload; an ODP upload; an ODSP upload—because we recognize that these kinds of programs should not fall to the property taxpayers of the city of Ottawa or any community in our province.

1610

We have a five-point plan. It's a little bit more precise and sophisticated than the blunt instrument the Conservatives try to trot out every election of tax cuts. We have brought, in fact, specific tax cuts: the capital gains tax cut to the manufacturing sector. We're investing in skills and education, a \$1.5-billion, three-year skills-to-jobs action program; rebuilding infrastructure, \$1 billion; boosting innovation, \$300 million in new investments and proposed tax incentives, including something that I know the Premier and our Minister of Research and Innovation—something that's very important to eastern Ontario, which is in many ways a Silicon Valley North: a 10-year Ontario income tax exemption for new corporations that commercialize research developed by qualified Canadian universities, colleges or research institutions. As I've mentioned, we're cutting business taxes: \$750 million in business tax relief over four years, starting in 2007-08, and we're partnering with businesses, such as the \$1.15-billion Next Generation of Jobs Fund.

What I find ironic about the official opposition, and really their leader in exile, who's the federal finance minister, because he's out there pulling the strings—sometimes I don't know who the monkey is and who the organ grinder is when it comes to that party. They are taking their directions from Mr. Flaherty. This is the same guy who brought downloading to the municipal sector. He's the same guy who cut social assistance to the most vulnerable in our community.

We have a different approach on this side under the leadership of our Premier. What I find interesting: A day doesn't go by when a member of this cabinet does not get a letter quietly passed over asking for more money for their ridings. Yet, at the same time, they want to cut spending by \$5 billion. I can start naming some of the individuals who have sent letters. A couple of them are sitting right over there; they're putting their hands up. The point of the matter is, you can't have it both ways. It reminds me of that old story where the veterinarian wanted to set up shop with the taxidermist and they put a sign in their window saying, "Either way, you get your dog back." You've got to choose a side. We're on the side of public services. We're on the side of making sure that individuals who are the most vulnerable in our society are taken care of. We're not going to go and play the game of the Conservative Party of talking down the economy. We're proud of the men and women who invest in this economy, who sacrifice to create the jobs in a very tough economic environment. We're very proud of the fact that despite tough economic challenges, we're investing in public services, health, education, skills training, post-secondary education, and supporting and partnering with our municipal partners.

I'm proud to be part of a government that talks up the economy, and not one that talks down to the people of this great province.

**Mr. Toby Barrett:** I rise today to speak to this opposition day motion before us, and to try and draw this government's attention to some concerning situations



with respect to the economies in municipalities down my way. I'm thinking specifically of Haldimand county. Haldimand councillor Craig Grice was at Queen's Park today.

Since this session has opened, I have reported to this House virtually every day on the impacts and the need to mitigate the impacts of land disputes, not only in Haldimand, but Brantford and Brant county as well. I've told members a number of times of the construction site protest by HDI, the Haudenosaunee Development Institute. The extortion demands have brought development to a halt throughout Haldimand county, and now we see this in Brant and Brantford. You don't hear Skilsaws, you don't hear hammers pounding, and the municipal leaders hear this silence, the sound of their economy going down the drain.

When these municipalities attempt to work with government—to quote our motion—“to implement effective long-range plans to ensure” their economic well-being, they're met with roadblocks. It falls on deaf ears and only exacerbates the problems they're already dealing with. I think of the official plans of Haldimand, Norfolk, Brant, Hamilton and elsewhere languishing without approval, for years in some cases, waiting for Six Nations' approval. I also think of recent reports of the province's principal land claims negotiator offering up a two-year development freeze along the Grand River to bargain for an exchange and to attempt to stop the protest.

Recently in Haldimand, I find it unconscionable that despite their best efforts to convince this government that long-awaited support for land-dispute impacts is needed immediately, support for individual families—I think of Dave Brown. He was at Queen's Park today. He and his family live on Argyle Street in Caledonia. Support for businesses and certainly municipalities like Haldimand—they left that 2008 budget table with a few scraps. In spite of testifying at pre-budget hearings, coming to ROMA, in spite of having rallies in towns like Caledonia, there's no mention in the budget, no mention of any assistance for Haldimand's recovery plan. They did submit an official recovery plan. They requested a total of \$56 million; they requested \$8 million for sewer infrastructure. They met with officials at ROMA. Basically, they've been shut out from that \$450-million infrastructure fund.

Area headlines following that slap in the face by government really underlined the disturbing attitude emanating from this government. I'm referring to Aboriginal Affairs Minister Bryant. He provided advice to the mayor of Haldimand country, Marie Trainer, and he told her—I find this hard to believe—to “stop pooping” on Premier McGuinty. I find that unacceptable language. According to the regional news, this was “verified by Councillor Lorne Boyko, who admitted he thought the comment was a bit odd, coming from a provincial minister.”

After being shut out of the funding, the mayor was quoted as saying, “I think they are pooping on us,” referring to the members opposite. Our Haldimand mayor

is frustrated, and she states, “At what point do we stand up and say, ‘Enough is enough’?”

I'll mention that that same sentiment, because of the ever-growing land disputes, is coming from Brantford. I quote the Brantford Expositor: “‘I thought enough was enough,’ Mayor Hancock said in an interview. ‘The city and the people are being hurt by these actions, and what's being done is simply wrong.’” That was Brantford's mayor commenting on the increasing actions of native protestors stopping development in his city, something Haldimand residents have been dealing with for two years now.

**Mr. Paul Miller:** I'm just going to touch on a few things today in reference to the motion. I'd like to start off with jobs. The government is quite thrilled about their job creation program, and they were bragging last week about the fact that they had created 300 jobs in Essex-Kent. I would like to invite them to the Hamilton area. We've lost about 17,000 jobs in the last nine years. My problem with this is that if job creation—and they talk about training people so that they can get jobs. That's great. But if there are no jobs to go to, where do these people go for a job? Fort McMurray, in Alberta? I don't think that's helping the economy in Ontario. I can safely say, coming from the Hamilton area, that in the last 20 years no major company has opened up in the Hamilton area—no jobs, just jobs leaving, going back to the States, going back to Europe, going to Mexico. No new jobs. I'm not sure if Ontario ends at Burlington; maybe this government thinks it does, because we're not getting a lot in the Hamilton area and the Niagara region. It's almost getting to a point where it's a depressed area; it's really bad.

1620

As far as infrastructure goes, they announced \$1 billion. Well, after we broke it down, it looks like Toronto is getting \$466 million, Mississauga is getting a good chunk, and I think the balance is about \$380 million for the entire province. By the time everyone else gets a piece of the action, there isn't going to be a heck of a lot done in the Hamilton area, I'll tell you that.

Yes, they did announce a \$14-million pedestrian bridge, a welcome addition to the east end of Hamilton. We need that to get across the Queen E. There's no doubt that that's a good program, but it doesn't even come near to the infrastructure problems we have in the Hamilton area. I could take them on a tour of the bridges of the area as a former tradesman and show them the rotting angle irons, the rotting beams and the cement crumbling on our overpasses.

This is happening all over the province. As has been witnessed this week, we've had some major accidents in the province, with bridges collapsing. This infrastructure program the government has announced doesn't go far enough at all. It doesn't even meet the requirements that we in Hamilton—I think you could spend the entire \$1 billion in Hamilton and then move on from there.

There are no new businesses, as I said. I think the latest one that pulled out was Ancam. You were there,



Madam Speaker, when Ancam pulled out. A thousand jobs at the height of their business; five years ago, they had 1,000 employees between the Burlington plant and the Hamilton plant—gone. They sold the equipment and went back to Germany; they took some of the technology and left the country. There are no replacement jobs. These people are out of work, some of them with over 30 years' experience. Training? These people are already trained; they're already tradesmen. They're already capable of doing jobs, but they have nowhere to go to get a job. You can announce all the training programs you want, but if there are no jobs, you're flapping in the wind, so to speak.

Let's go to the environment. I could write a book on the environmental problems in Hamilton, having myself been in the steel industry for over 30 years. We've been ignored. They haven't addressed it. They don't have enough inspectors, they don't enforce the violations and they don't fine them—nothing. The fines are just pocket change for some of these companies. It's unacceptable.

The latest problem, as you've seen in the papers, is the melt shop at Dofasco and the carbide plant next door, and US Steel, which now owns Stelco. They've been polluting for years, and it's getting worse. Why? Because they haven't upgraded their environmental secondary programs since the 1980s. Why? Because they're losing business, they haven't got enough employees and there aren't enough jobs in the area. They can't generate enough money, so the government needs to step in and help them out. Did they? No.

Liberty Energy is a new company that wants to open up one new incinerator, and the city wants to build another incinerator in Hamilton. All we asked for was a proper EA process to be followed, an individual EA on this new technology they're bringing into Hamilton. Our airshed in Hamilton is already overburdened. We have pollution everywhere. I'm not quite sure that the number of dioxins that are going to come out of this stack are acceptable; according to the investigations, they were. I personally never had an opportunity to tour the plant in California. I have had no exposure. I have asked for exposure to their technology. I haven't had a meeting with them. I've requested a meeting; they don't want to talk. I mean, I have some knowledge of environmental controls and things that are conducive to the steel industry. They just seem to be avoiding the situation.

The highlight of this was when I brought this forward to Mr. Gerretsen, the minister. I wrote him a letter, dated March 6: "I am deeply disappointed in the Ministry of the Environment's decision to deny the application for review of the three certificates of approval for Dofasco's KOBM melt shop in Hamilton....

"I am requesting that you intervene in this situation by taking immediate action to reverse this decision.

"The residents of Hamilton East are desperate for the Ministry of the Environment to send inspectors to survey the emissions from Dofasco's KOBM melt shop and" other industries in the area "and, subsequently, enforce the emissions laws"—enforce the laws. Do what it says

on the books. Enforce the laws to protect the people. It's not happening. This government should be ashamed of themselves on their environmental record. They just keep allowing, overseeing and following up too late.

What happens? The people suffer. The respiratory problems in my area are very high, probably one of the highest in the province. The horrendous, visible emissions from Dofasco's melt shop should be enough to warrant an inspection and enforcement. I sent him the shocking photographs of the clouds hanging over Hamilton East—Stoney Creek and central Hamilton. You're well aware, Madam Speaker, coming from that area, what the people face on a daily basis with cleanup. That's the stuff you can see. Those aren't the microscopic things that go into your lungs and into the tissues. That's only what you can see. So you can be sure there's more behind what you see.

What are they doing about it? Nothing. Did I get a response from the minister? No, I didn't. Dated March 6 of this year—no response. Are we once again sweeping environmental problems under the carpet? Are we once again going to ignore the health and welfare of the citizens in our city? It appears to be what's going on.

Education: The Liberals stood up today, and the minister was talking about her great record in literacy and bragging about the numbers. I hate to break the bubble, but in Hamilton the numbers are down. I just had a meeting with the school board. Why are they down? Because poverty goes hand in hand with poor marks. Why? Because the kids are undernourished, there aren't enough EAs, there aren't enough teachers for English as a second language and there's no one-on-one anymore. And they brag about class sizes.

Then the famous funding formula: They haven't fixed it. How do they treat our board? They say, "You have empty seats in the core of the city," in the older schools. So they either close the schools down or won't give us money because they say there are empty seats. But what they don't take into consideration is the growth of the city, the suburbs where they need new schools. They're in dire need of three new schools in Ancaster, Mount Hope area, the upper mountain, Binbrook area, Winona—growing by leaps and bounds. We don't even have enough schools. I as a parent would not want to ship my children halfway across the city, spending three hours on a bus every day, for an education. Why? It's hard to control, they'll be tired, and I'm not sure how much they're going to learn, missing all that time in travelling. It's just unacceptable. They have to fix the funding formula and move into the new century with some understanding that this funding formula is outdated, it needs a lot of renovations and it needs it done immediately.

Tourism: The Hamilton area is well noted for its tourist attractions: the botanical gardens; right down the road we have Niagara Falls; we have the wine tours. We have a lot of excellent tourist areas. They're not sinking a lot of money into tourism in the Hamilton area—not enough. They're giving a tidbit. It's not enough. We need more. We have a great area. We now have a very well



run airport that's just dying for more planes and more passenger destinations that we could use to expand the Niagara region. It's a beautiful area. It's a hidden jewel.

**Mr. John Yakubuski:** Any help from government?

**Mr. Paul Miller:** No help—including the Eramosa Karst, which I've been fighting for. The member for Niagara West—Glanbrook is also fighting for it. It's a jewel. These are the feeder lands for the karst. Part of it has already been designated, but the government falls short. All of a sudden they don't want to discuss the other 60 or 80 acres. They're telling us, "Oh, it's a municipal problem. Municipal has designated it as a development area." I hate to tell the government, but they froze that, and they want to go on with meetings. The government claims they've met with the people, that they've met with all the players. Wrong. They didn't meet with the people, the Friends of Eramosa Karst. They did not meet with them in an official capacity.

1630

The minister said he toured it, and he asked if I've toured it. I only live near there. I've toured it many times. I've toured it and I've looked at the problems. They're ignoring it. Instead of catering to developers, why don't they do the right thing and have the feeder lands designated as part of that protected area under the Hamilton Conservation Authority? They are more than willing to take over those lands, and they're happy to do it. They've even put forth requests to do it.

As they do the shuffle about whose responsibility it is to designate the land, it's my understanding, from a very good source, that the Premier can sign a letter doing so on those lands. The minister never mentioned that: that the Premier and the cabinet can sign a letter designating that land. If he looks in the rules, that's what can be done. No talk of that; I haven't heard anything about that.

Let's talk about health. Not-for-profit home and nursing care is still grossly underfunded in our area. We have temporary relief in the extremely flawed home care competitive bidding process, but we don't fix it. We're still not fixing it. We're still going ahead with this plan that has been obviously proven unsuccessful.

Wage security protection: I'd like to talk a little bit about Bill 6, which I brought forward. The government says they want to create jobs; they want to have educated workers. But what they don't want to do is take care of people when they lose their jobs. They don't want to pay their severance. They don't want them to get their back pay. They don't want them to get their holiday pay. That's what Bill 6 would have addressed.

What happened to Bill 6? Bill 6 got squashed at committee. They put it on the back burner. All they did was put a show on in the House that they're for working people in this province—"We're going to help them, we're going to work with them"—and as soon as my bill got to the place where it counted the most, all five members of the government turned it down, and one left because he had a phone call.

They're not walking the talk. It's just all for show. I'm very disappointed. When I came to this House, the first

thing I was told—I heard more than one from the other side say, "We want to work as a team with the opposition. We want to do what's best for the people of Ontario."

I guess I was a little naïve, because I believed that maybe we could work with them. But in my short tenure here, I can see that's not the case. If it isn't their idea, they shoot it down. If it's a good idea, will they work with us to bring it forward to the committee? No. They'll shoot it down because it's not theirs. Sinful. Terrible. I don't know how they can even look in the mirror with that kind of attitude.

We're supposed to be here—all of us—to help the people of Ontario. It doesn't work that way. It's unfortunate that people talk about helping people but, when shove comes to push, they don't do it. It doesn't happen.

Needless to say, the NDP and myself will be supporting the member's motion, not because the government didn't do anything. I'm not going to sit here and say they didn't do anything. They did something, but not enough. They just cut it short—real short.

All I know is that in my area—and your area, Madam Speaker, which we represent—we were grossly ignored in this budget. We were underfunded. This is the kicker: The government brags about the \$12 million and the \$10 million for the bridge and all this that they sent to Hamilton. They were supposed to get that money. They made our mayor and our council think that they weren't going to get it this year, so when they got it, they were so excited that they got what they were promised before that they sent a letter thanking for something they'd already been given, because they didn't think they were going to get it. So it's piggybacked on—where's the new money? It's money that we were supposed to get anyway—our allotment for infrastructure and for uploading. They like to call it uploading. I'm not sure where this new money's coming from.

One of the members talked about the big investment in one of our facilities downtown, the YMCA. That's great, but how about the 32 arenas? How about the ball diamonds that are in dire need?

In our community, we have a world-class rugby team that has played in England and Australia and won tournaments. They don't even have a field to play on. We have people who want to play cricket. Cricket? That rings a bell. Didn't \$1 million go to a cricket club in Toronto? I didn't see one cent coming to Hamilton. I don't want to be facetious, but let's spread it around a little bit. We need cricket fields and a permanent rugby field because rugby is a type of game that chews up the field. They need their own facility and clubhouse. We have an excellent rugby team. They're well known throughout England, Scotland and other places. They've been to New Zealand. But what support do they get locally from our government? Nothing.

So why don't we start opening the coffers for things that are west of Burlington? Why don't we start giving some money to the city that needs it the most, one of the oldest cities in our province, one of the most over-



burdened with infrastructure problems, waterworks, bridges—jobs? We need it now, not a promise three, four years from now. We've been on the back burner for the last 15 or 20 years. When is this government going to wake up and start doing stuff for that part of the province?

**Ms. Laurel C. Broten:** I'm pleased to have a chance to join the debate and speak to the opposition motion and express the views of my constituents. I would say that I come into this House to speak about the views of my constituents. In their opinion, as I had a chance to recently travel around my community and meet with my constituents, I can tell you that they hold a strong view that the actions being taken by our government and the continued improvements that we are making to—in particular what I want to speak today—our health care services are improving the quality of their lives. At the end of the day, all partisan politics aside, that is what our goal in this House should be: to work each and every day to improve the lives of our constituents.

I want to talk about how sometimes as we debate in this place and talk about dollar figures, it does not crystallize in our minds what an investment means to real people. If I can talk about the government's wait time strategy, the dollar figure associated with it in the 2007-08 year was \$281 million in new funding to reduce wait times in Ontario.

What does that mean for Ontarians and my constituents? That means that more surgeries, more MRIs, more CT scans were able to be undertaken. If we can improve the services that we provide in our hospitals, we're able to make sure that people get treatment faster.

So if I take a look at a real example of something that can improve the quality of life of constituents, I can look at cataract surgery. If we look at cataract surgeries, 99,000 more cataract surgeries were able to be undertaken. That meant that the wait time for cataract surgeries went down by 61% and, in real numbers, 191 days. For constituents who live in my community who are waiting for cataract surgery, a reduced wait of 191 days drastically improves the quality of their life, and that improvement in the quality of their life is directly linked to the fact that we are making investments in health care.

That is why I'm so proud to be standing here again as part of a majority government that, for the first time across the board, has sought to tackle wait times, to measure them. Unlike the previous government, which didn't want to measure wait times, frankly because they didn't want to know what the results would be, we have measured those wait times and we've made that information public.

It's important to work with the experts, the professionals, to put in benchmarks of what's an acceptable period of time for someone to wait for that surgery. In 10 key medical services, we have very aggressive access targets. We're working very hard to achieve those targets, and we are doing that. That means that people who live in my community who might go to Trillium Health Centre, which is one of the health centres across

the province that is helping us meet these goals of ours, are seeing improvements in their health care, and that's what this is about.

**1640**

As a government that goes to people to ask for their commitment to have us come here, we said on their doorstep that we want to come here and work on their behalf. I can tell you that in the health field, the actions that we're taking, the investments we're making and the long-term planning that we're undertaking are precisely to improve their quality of life.

When we take a look at emergency departments, we now have an emergency department action plan. I can tell you that an emergency department is really a gateway for many people to health services. Whether it should be or shouldn't be, it is. Unlike simply having more hip, knee or cataract surgeries, when you want to improve the wait times in emergency rooms, what you need to do is figure out who's in that emergency room. Who should be accessing health care somewhere else? When it comes to our emergency department action plan, yes, we are making sure that we retain more emergency department physicians. We're launching pilot projects, and changing ICU and emergency department procedures. But, very importantly, we connect to that our increased resources for home care, to help people get out of the hospital and into their homes, and our increased resources to make sure, for those who are in those emergency rooms and should be seeing a family physician, the fact that we have more family physicians, more family health teams and greater resources to community health centres means that those individuals can receive the care that they need and have long-term commitments by a physician or a medical team to them, which can help improve their lives in the long term.

On that front, this resolution speaks to long-term planning. We need to look ahead, and the actions of the government have consequences for many years. I want to talk a little bit about some of the specific things that have been precisely put in place by our government to ensure that we have a long-term view: increased child immunization, 1.8 million children have been vaccinated with three new free vaccines for chicken pox, pneumococcal disease and meningococcal meningitis. That saved an average family \$600 per child. We now also have a program where we are having the HPV vaccine beginning this fall, which is also saving families \$400 per child.

But it is about so much more than the dollar savings. It is about having a long-term view, improving the lives of Ontarians and recognizing that we need to break down the silos when it comes to how we approach government action, that we need to take a look at an expense that can be put forward to assist Ontarians to screen their newborn children, for example. Let's undertake that. We will improve the quality of life of that child and of that family, and at the end of the day, we will have benefits in other aspects of health services. For us, it is so much about long-term planning, and I would really urge my friends opposite to take a look at things such as the new



newborn screening exam and the new programs that have been brought in with respect to chronic disease management.

Frankly, for many, many years we had a government who now sit in opposition—thank goodness, for those of us in Ontario who access the health system—who did not want to see advancement and improvement to the health system. What they wanted Ontarians to do was to seek health care elsewhere, to go about their business and not depend on the health system.

But we believe in public health care. We believe in medicare. We've been making investments to that system, because under our watch, that system will be continually improved upon—and it has been—and we will see families who know that they can depend on and turn to those services, because we believe in Ontario families.

I would suggest to you that a very big day that we held in October last year would indicate that in the opinion of Ontario families, we are very much on the right track, and they want us to continue along that pathway. That is exactly what we are going to do for the years ahead.

**Mr. Ted Arnott:** Let me say at the outset how privileged I feel to have the opportunity to speak on behalf of the people of Wellington-Halton Hills in this Legislature this afternoon, for I'm ever mindful of the trust and the responsibility that is implied in the office they have conferred upon me. It is their aspirations that I seek to embody, their interests that I seek to further and their values that I seek to represent. Therefore, it won't surprise you, Madam Speaker, that I support this motion.

For many years, the government has known, or at least should have known, about the economic challenge in which we now find ourselves. Economists and other experts told us very clearly that global pressures were on the horizon. It was more than three years ago that we began to hear a new word, a new term: "outsourcing." That word meant manufacturing jobs leaving Ontario and being replaced by manufacturing jobs abroad. This should have been a wake-up call for the government of Ontario. Unfortunately, for the over 190,000 Ontarians who have lost their good-paying factory jobs, their government consciously chose not to prepare. It chose not to address the tax and regulatory burdens that are undermining our competitiveness and leading Ontario into a have-not status. It chose not to act in an effective, meaningful way. If this government had heeded the warnings of our caucus, it would have developed a long-term strategy to ensure Ontario's ability to compete and thrive in a global marketplace.

Nearly three years ago, I brought forward a motion in this House to do just that. My motion called upon the standing committee on finance and economic affairs to begin an investigation into Ontario's economic and industrial competitiveness and, secondly, to develop an action plan for Ontario to maintain and expand our domestic and international markets. Such a study could have been undertaken at no incremental cost to taxpayers. It could have consulted the foremost experts on economic policy, business, as well as labour, to determine how the

government of Ontario might respond to the challenges which were then on the horizon. With the support of industry and economic stakeholders across the province, my motion was also adopted in this House with the support of every single government member, save one. Even that, however, was not enough to move the government from its inertia. Once again, they chose not to act. Now paying the price are thousands of families in and around my riding. Faced with unexpected job losses, people are struggling to pay their bills and meet their obligations to their children. For some families it might mean cancelling that long-awaited summer vacation; for others it might mean that their kids couldn't play hockey this year; and for some it means that there's no food in the house, which leaves no alternative but the food bank. For others it may mean the loss of their homes.

The practical reality of job loss is bleak and the challenge of re-entering the workforce is daunting, especially for those who for many years have earned a decent income in the manufacturing sector and who may still be years from retirement. I think of the 1,100 people who worked at the BF Goodrich plant in Kitchener who lost their jobs in 2006. The company moved its operations to facilities in Indiana and Alabama. According to the January 31 edition of the Guelph Mercury, Engle Canada's Guelph plant will lose 225 manufacturing jobs next month and most of their manufacturing work will soon be done in Austria, while the assembly operations will be done in Pennsylvania. The Kitchener Frame plant, formerly Budd Canada, is also at risk of closure by 2010 unless the company finds new contracts. Some 500 have lost time and wages in the past month because of a strike at American Axle and Manufacturing, which appears to be ongoing. As recently as 2003, this plant employed 1,900 workers.

Of course, these examples provide only a snapshot of the disruption caused by the manufacturing crisis in our area and repeated across the province. As someone who is privileged to represent Wellesley, Wilmot and Woolwich townships, as well as part of the city of Kitchener, I have great affection for the people of these communities. But I also know that they, like too many others across the province, are experiencing tremendous hardship because of this government's inattention to changing economic times. We would be in a much stronger position today if the McGuinty government had taken the opportunities presented three or four years ago to listen to the experts and to develop a long-range plan before the manufacturing jobs meltdown had actually materialized.

We need leadership from a Premier who seems willing to preside over the genteel decline of the province of Ontario. We on this side of the House reject that very premise of inevitable decline and believe that Ontario will be great again starting in 2011 with the election of a Progressive Conservative government.

1650

**Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn:** It's a pleasure to be here today, obviously enjoying the debate. We've heard from the opposition parties. They've been doing what I sup-



pose is their job, to try to lend some positive ideas that might make the province of Ontario a better place. But certainly if you read the motion that is before us today, there's not much in there. There's really not much you could say is constructive criticism; there's a dearth of ideas. Certainly I think there are a number of people around the Legislature who bring ideas forward on a daily basis.

But the people of Ontario, last fall, had the opportunity to express their dissatisfaction or satisfaction with the way that this province had been governed for the past four years. All three, all four—or five parties, actually, came forward with ideas as to how they would like to see the province run for the next four years.

The Conservatives and their leader came forward with their ideas. The election was held and the Conservatives were there; their leader was not. The NDP put forward some ideas. The election was held and the NDP came back with 10 seats. That says something. That says that the work that had been done in the four years preceding the last election was the type of government the people of Ontario really wanted to see, and they wanted to see it for the next four years.

I believe the reason for that is that the McGuinty government, during the previous four years, from 2003 to 2007, had touched the lives of Ontarians in the areas that are most important to them: in their schools, in their hospitals, in their places of employment—places that had been ignored by the previous government, when you saw public education under siege, when you saw teachers being laid off, teachers being treated as if they were second-class citizens, teachers being treated as if teaching was not an honourable profession, as if looking after our children and educating the young people in our society was not a noble profession.

That changed under our government. We were able to reach an agreement with those people that we entrust the education of our children to, and we were able to move forward on that agenda.

And it shows in the investments. If you just look at my own community, you'll see some of the investments that have been made in my own community of Oakville, the region of Halton. Since we took over from the Conservative government, we have increased funding—for example, let's take the French public schools in Halton: a 62% increase in funding over four years; French separate school, a 52% increase in funding. The Halton District School Board has experienced a 42% increase in funding under our government, and the separate schools have been the recipients of a 39% increase in funding.

That tells you that you have a government in place today, and you've had a government for the past four years, that places the value of our children's education right at the top of their priority list, not where it was under the previous government that's bringing forward this motion today. There's a huge difference.

You finally saw the advent of growth funding in communities that have been experiencing growth. Under the previous government—and I know this because I was

a member of council at the region of Halton, the town of Oakville—neighbourhoods and parents used to fight each other, because the previous process forced the closure of schools before you could open new schools in the growth boards. We said, "That's no good." We said, "We think much more highly of our students than the previous government did," and we brought in growth funding. You've seen new high schools.

Now, you hear an awful lot from the opposition about jobs. You hear an awful lot about the economy. You hear about the loss of jobs in some sectors of the economy. What you don't hear the opposition talking about is that we're closing in on the creation of close to half a million net new jobs in the province of Ontario. That's net new jobs, and they're good jobs. Those are jobs in the financial sector, jobs in southern Ontario, in northern Ontario. Throughout the province of Ontario, we're seeing the creation of new jobs, and we're doing it in a strategic way.

I think nothing typifies that strategy more than what was introduced in the last budget, where we said to the people of Ontario and to the people of Canada, "If you bring forward an idea in a post-secondary educational institution in Canada and you incubate that idea in the province of Ontario and you commercialize that idea, you get a 10-year income tax rebate." Just think back. Could you imagine a Mike Harris bringing in something with that type of vision? Just think back. Could you imagine Ernie Eves doing something like that, or John Tory coming up with something like that? This is an imaginative policy, an imaginative process, that is moving us ahead.

There are a number of areas where you've seen major improvements, so when I see this motion here today, I look at it and I shake my head, because if that is the best that that party can do, we have a long way to go.

**Mr. Jeff Leal:** What about Ford in Oakville? Tell us about Ford.

**Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn:** My friend from Peterborough wants to know about the auto industry.

Take a look at the auto industry: Ford of Canada, under the previous Conservative government. I sat there as a member of my own community and watched the Ford truck plant close, watched it shut down, watched it move out of this country, and watched the Conservative government at Queen's Park sit on its hands and do absolutely nothing.

What happened when we took over? We moved in, we brought in a plan that has generated to date close to \$8 billion in new investments, close to 8,000 new jobs in the auto industry. We've just announced 300 jobs in Windsor that were referred to—and I won't name the member; he knows who he is. Some members think that's peanuts; some members think that's a good time to say "Whoop-pee." To those families in those plants, that means a paycheque. That means the dignity of work. That means being able to pay a mortgage, to buy groceries, to do the things that everybody in Ontario is entitled to do.



We just announced this week 500 net new jobs in Oakville at the Ford assembly plant. We find the models that are being produced now as a result of our investment under the integrated auto strategy we have. The Ford Flex is a new product being introduced. The Ford Edge is selling incredibly well. The MXK is selling incredibly well.

What has happened is that we have been able to turn the auto industry around, not just in my community of Oakville, where it's so important, but right throughout this province we're seeing the creation of new jobs. The next generation of automobiles that are going to be built will be built in Canada, by Canadians, and they'll provide income to people in Ontario who have relied on the auto strategy, relied on the auto industry for many years. What people don't realize is that for every one job you create on the auto assembly line, you create another eight jobs in the community. That's something we don't think of—the spinoff effects of jobs. Quite often we just look at the jobs. If you take the figures that have been announced, you take a look at Woodstock, a Conservative-held riding—8,000 new jobs as a result of the auto strategy.

I could go on and on. I could walk you through the hiring of new police officers in my community. A balanced budget: You'd think when economic times were so good, why could that government not balance the budget? Why could the previous government not balance the budget and why couldn't they come forward and admit to the people of Ontario that they didn't have the wherewithal to balance the budget?

Times are good economically. We finally have balanced budgets in the province of Ontario now under the McGuinty government, respect for our cities, infrastructure plans—you could go on and on.

Under the previous government, the worst province—

**Mr. Tim Hudak:** On a point of order, Madam Speaker: Just to clarify, did the member say that times are good economically?

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath):** That's not a point of order.

The member for Oakville.

**Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn:** I don't think the Tories would know a good time if they saw it.

Wind energy: the last in Canada under the Tories. Where are we now under the McGuinty government? The first in Canada. Some of the largest solar farms in the world are now opening in Ontario. What happened when the NDP were in power? You may or may not know this: They cancelled every conservation program; coal emissions were going up. Conservatives—more coal, more coal, more coal. That's all it was: "Let's burn more coal."

They even voted against the greenbelt. I'm going to end there because we've got more speakers, but I think that typifies the sort of response we've had, that there's a greenbelt out there now that is the envy of the world. It should have received the support of every member of this House, and there are a lot who voted against it.

Thank you for your time.

**Mr. John O'Toole:** It's a real privilege today to stand in support of the opposition day motion. Quite frankly, the motion is really a testimony that the McGuinty government has no plan. I think it was best summarized by the member from Wellington-Halton Hills in his private member's bill that he introduced some time ago that pointed out there was no plan for the economy.

1700

Fundamentally, the proof is what we see each day. I think we can start by looking at the record currently, and if you look forward, you're even more uncertain. The economy basically is in shambles, by any measure, in terms of our linkage with the United States and the economy and not recognizing that, about being competitive in our tax structure both at the individual level as well as the business level. Small business creates most of the jobs, and everyone knows that the red tape in small business is trouble.

The previous speaker mentioned energy prices. They have no energy plan except to raise prices. That's their conservation plan, to raise the price so you cannot afford to use electricity to heat your house and cook your food.

Also, if you look at the current questions in the House today with respect to education, even with the friendly measures of the government with education they have serious problems. In the Toronto District School Board they're going to change the board from its current governance structure to a new structure. They don't know what to do about the pools thing. Those pools never closed when we were in government, and yet we did make educational funding changes.

But the most important thing, I believe, is the health care debate. The health care debate erupted a couple of weeks ago when David MacKinnon from the Ontario Hospital Association said that all the hospitals in Ontario were in deficit. They've been quite loyal to this government because the government has tried, in the form of the health tax, the largest single tax increase, and you have to ask yourself—they had this large tax increase, the health tax or the health premium, and now we know that 70-plus hospitals are in deficit. We also know the rules around that, how they're guarding themselves. This is the treachery of the whole dilemma we're in, the lack of a plan.

But there really is a plan. The plan is not to be accountable. You see it in the legislation they've passed. The first bill that started to worry me was Bill 8, which mandated that hospitals had to balance their budgets or they had to have a budget reduction plan. In fact, it's called the hospital service accountability agreement. Now hospitals are having to cut.

How do I know that? I was at a meeting at Rouge Valley hospital the other night. We all know they're cutting the mental health program in that community and those victims, those patients, the people who suffer that illness, are outraged and spoke very eloquently about how they have no regard at all for the health program. Before that, we knew that the program was going to be cancelled. They clawed \$3 million out of the health plan



for the Lakeridge Health system. It was all about community mental health and mental health supports.

The plan they have now—they have the new LHIN, and we know from the Central East LHIN, in my riding, the Uxbridge Cottage Hospital is in serious trouble. They could lose their emergency department. I was at a meeting last night in Port Perry. They're looking at the potential of their hospital emergency. There is a fundraising campaign in my riding at both hospitals, and I just want to convince members that this government—and here it is. "George Smitherman, Ontario's Minister of Health, implied that the public should not be fooled by the concerns raised by the deficit-ridden hospitals." He said they'll have to defend themselves and he blames it all on the LHINs. The LHINs are just a guardian protecting Smitherman from taking any real criticism.

There's no plan except to raise your taxes and cut your services. So beware of the Liberal government.

**Mrs. Liz Sandals:** I'm delighted to be able to speak to the opposition motion, although obviously I have rather a different take on it. In fact, I would like to speak about two components of our plan to grow the economy, because the idea from the people over here who have nothing to say except that the sky is falling is just totally false. We do have a plan to grow the economy, and I would like to talk about investing in education and investing in infrastructure.

First of all, let's have a look at what we're doing in education, because we understand two things about education. We understand that, fundamentally, if you invest in the education of an individual, you will make that person's life better. They will be healthier and wealthier and they will have a better quality of life. But we also know that if you invest in somebody's education, you're growing the economy. We can't compete with Mexico's cheap wages; we know that. But where the Ontario economy successfully competes is on a highly skilled workforce. We know that when we invest in education, we're investing in our economic growth.

We've done some very important things over our mandate. If you look at secondary education, we are now having students stay until they're 18 or until they actually graduate from high school. But we understand that you can't simply tell kids they have to hang out until they are 18. You have to supply programming for the kids who are struggling so they have a way of staying until 18. What we have done is we have put a student success teacher in every secondary school in Ontario. We have investments in every secondary school so that the kids who are at risk are getting help. They're getting help with more co-op credits so that they can get job experience. They're getting help with high-skills majors, so they have programs now that teach them skills. For those who can't do academics, they have skills-based programs, and that's a success. Our dropout rate has gone down and our graduation rate is going up.

As a result of that, what we are seeing is increased participation in post-secondary. Did you know that there are 100,000 more students in our post-secondary system

today than when we took office? That's 100,000 students, 100,000 people who are going to be better qualified to get jobs in our economy, because the people with education have jobs.

For the first time, we have grants for low-income students. We are helping to recruit students from families who have never gone to post-secondary before. We have programs to recruit first-generation immigrants. We have programs to recruit people who maybe live in northern or rural areas where there isn't a history of people participating in post-secondary, because we know that for those students to succeed and to help our economy, they need to go to school.

I'd like to take a few minutes to talk about some of the investments. I'd like to talk about infrastructure investments in my own community of Guelph, because we know that when you invest in infrastructure, you do two things, again. You help address the deficit in public infrastructure that the opposition left behind, and we know there's billions of dollars in public infrastructure deficit. They left behind two deficits. One of them was the infrastructure deficit, and we're addressing that. But when you invest in infrastructure, you also ensure that in the short term there are jobs. So I'd like to tell you about some of the things that are happening in my community.

In the municipality, we just had a great announcement. My municipality applied to the MIII fund, the municipal infrastructure investment initiative, with an application to invest in a convent, an historic building that was going to be torn down. With the \$5 million that the city of Guelph is receiving from the province, we are able to invest in that convent and turn it into a new civic museum. Thank you, Minister Caplan. We truly appreciate this funding. I had a whole parking lot full of people standing there clapping, because the community really wanted this investment and we found the money to do it.

We have invested in roads and bridges. We've invested in public transit. We have invested in social housing repair, \$1.3 million to repair the social housing in Guelph and area.

What about some other investments? At the University of Guelph, in the last few months alone, we have, from the fall economic statement, invested over \$8 million in campus renewal. The universities have told us over and over again that they have a deferred maintenance problem, that they need to go and fix the old buildings: \$8 million from the fall economic statement; another \$11.97 million—almost \$12 million—that I was pleased to announce at the University of Guelph in a building that was new when I was a student and is now, like me, a little bit old and grey on top. We were actually under a crack in a wall that had just appeared this week.

1710

We were able to say to the university, "Here's almost \$20 million in funding, in just the last few months alone, for you to fix buildings on this campus."

But we know that we also need to invest in new teaching spaces. Minister Milloy was in my riding just recently to announce \$9.5 million for a new primary care



small animal clinic. That will help the students learn how to provide primary animal care, not just the specialized care that OVC specializes in, and that will help pet owners all over the province, with more highly trained veterinarians.

Madam Speaker, I want to tell you and the viewers out there that this government does have a program for investing in Ontario and keeping our economy working.

**Mr. Peter Shurman:** I am pleased to rise in support of this motion by my colleague from Leeds–Grenville.

Like Emperor Nero, Premier McGuinty fiddles while Ontario burns. Is it a metaphor? Is it an expression that we use, maybe a little bit too much? Perhaps, but it certainly applies in this instance.

This province slips ever closer to have-not status with each passing day. The four horsemen of the apocalypse—sitting there across the front benches on the government side—repeatedly get up in this House and tell us that everything is okay. And if it isn't okay, don't try and hold them accountable, because it's always someone else's fault. This government is extremely good at making promises and this government is exceptional at breaking them.

I've got to tell you from my own experience as a talk radio host in the past, I used to love this Premier, because he gave me so much grist for the mill. It began within weeks of his taking the premiership of the province with something called a health premium, which turned into a health tax. Everything that sounds like it isn't a tax seems to do that; most recently, a tire fee—a tire fee, not a tax.

Then there are things like a health care revolution, which, to me, seems to be turning into something more akin to a health care revolt. This government repeatedly falls short on commitments due to its inability to engage effectively in long-term planning.

Before I spent time as a radio talk show host, I spent about 30 years as a chief executive officer. A CEO is not unlike a minister. You run what is, in effect, a substantial company. The biggest single thing that a CEO has to manage is change, and it's strategic and long-range planning that addresses that.

What have the results been over the last four years? Some 200,000 manufacturing jobs lost on the watch of this government.

People may not see the future of Ontario now, but believe me, it will come.

No dependable long-term funding solution for municipalities facing the cost of repairing or replacing aging infrastructure: A perfect example comes from my own riding of Thornhill. The John Street bridge—a major artery in Markham—shut down earlier this month, causing major re-routing for people, due to the structure being so badly damaged due to age and weather that it has to undergo emergency repairs, as it is no longer safe for traffic.

On the health file, no movement on the Vaughan campus of care, which is the much-vaunted Vaughan hospital; Minister Smitherman himself has referred to that in this House. There should've been approval already

for master planning, but another Teflon-coated minister skates by.

No long-term plan to solve the perpetual hospital budget crunches experienced across the 905, at places like our own York Central Hospital, where they are experiencing a shortage of between \$2 million and \$3 million; despite the fact that we've got great, dedicated doctors and nurses, medical and administrative staff, horror stories on wait lists are coming from that hospital—as recently as yesterday, talking about a woman waiting in a much-needed bed for a D and C. Three days it took.

Projected population growth in the greater Golden Horseshoe of approximately three million people, with no significant action taken to address transportation and infrastructure needs and the growing pains that are going to accompany the influx of newcomers.

Parents of autistic children taken to court by a government that should be helping them obtain the type of education to which their children are entitled.

A Smoke-Free Ontario Act that has not been applied properly by the Minister of Health Promotion and has, in fact, led to burgeoning trade in illicit cigarettes and tobacco products, putting our kids at risk—the opposite of its intent—at a cost to taxpayers of approximately \$600 million.

I could go on and on, but the truth is that this government is not interested in the type of sound, long-term policy development and decisive action that will help move this province forward. The McGuinty Liberals opt for Santa Claus-type, one-off announcements that play well to the media and make stakeholders salivate but provide no real, meaningful, long-term solutions to the problems Ontarians face every single day.

**Mr. Wayne Arthurs:** I'm pleased to join in, this afternoon, in this particular debate. I almost wish that we could have been here this morning, the quality of the debate is so good this afternoon. The opposition day motion speaks to the “cherished services” being in jeopardy—our ability to support cherished services is in jeopardy. That's anything but the truth. The services that the people of Ontario cherish are health care, education and a social service network that provides support for those who are vulnerable in our community; provides a competitive tax base; supports industry so that job creation opportunities exist where government can partner; it supports cherished services where governments find means by which they can work together. For the past five years, this government has been doing each and every one of those things.

We have invested the taxpayers' dollars very heavily in our education system, and we're seeing real results from that. We're seeing higher graduation rates, higher test scores, students staying in school longer or getting training longer in schools than they did through the age of 18, and lower dropout rates as well. We have focused our attention, through budgets, on things like the Reaching Higher plan, which is investing very heavily in the post-secondary education system and providing the type of training and skills that the next generation of



workers are going to need. So we paid very close attention to the education system. We created a variety of new chairs so that we can attract the best and the brightest to teach our young people.

The people of this province want quality health care. Those of us on this side of the House who have spoken to today's resolution almost to a person have spoken about health care within their communities. They've spoken about family health teams, they've spoken about new hospital capacity, they've spoken about more of their constituents having access to primary physicians. They've talked about wait times being reduced in key areas. They've spoken to the wait times being in a place where people can find them and have an opportunity to evaluate whether their hospital or hospitals near them are providing the level of response that they expect. We're focused on those key public services that the people of this province do cherish.

On the economic front, the opposition would have you believe that the economy is going to hell in a handbasket. Daily in this Legislature, they tend to run down the economic resilience of the workers in this province and the businesses in this province. But it's not the reality. The reality is very much different. The reality is that the economy, since 2003 in this province, has created almost 450,000 net new jobs. That's an astounding number of net new jobs, new opportunities for employment. Where they've created jobs, the vast majority are in the private sector. But we've also created public sector jobs. We've provided opportunities in education and in health care and in those very cherished services that people so much want. We've provided opportunities in police servicing, in emergency services, in fire protection—in those services that people desperately need when they find themselves in jeopardy.

Yes, we've invested in public sector jobs, which churn the economy as well as the private sector, creating an environment where some hundreds of thousands of jobs have been created. It's why we invested, in the early days, in the auto industry. It's why, when Minister Cordiano at the time announced the auto investment strategy, we committed to major investments: because we recognized the importance of the auto industry.

1720

The opposition parties didn't like that particular strategy. Well, it has leveraged some \$7 billion of investment in the auto sector. In the absence of those investments, the opposition may have had a reason to complain about key elements of the industry in this province, but with those kinds of investments, it leaves very little opportunity for them to really complain about those types of investment strategies.

We need to have partners. People cherish their services, but they cherish them in partnership because we all know—and there are those in the Legislature on the opposite side who would be quick to remind us—that there is really only one taxpayer. It's why we've partnered with municipalities to ensure that using that one taxpayer's dollars is helping to rebuild the sorely

neglected infrastructure that was left to wither for 10 years or more under previous governments.

But we also expect our federal colleagues in elected office to be full partners with us. We're challenging them. We challenged them here in this Legislature to come to the table with us and invest in this province. The last thing we need is for those in the federal House to be suggesting that this is not a place to invest, that Ontario is not a good place to do business. We resent and respond negatively to those types of assertions by those in the federal government.

If the federal government would treat unemployed workers here in Ontario the way they're treated elsewhere, unemployed workers would find themselves \$4,000 better off per year. At a time when they need the support of government the most as they restructure their employment opportunities, as they look for new work opportunities, this is when they need the support of the federal government in all provinces, including Ontario. Thus we need to be treated fairly, in similar fashion to other provinces; that's why we need to have them invest those additional dollars. We need them to invest that \$4,000 per employee on an annual basis here in the province of Ontario to help them during their time of transition.

We're moving forward on infrastructure needs, and we need the federal government to continue to be at the table in those initiatives. We don't need them making one-off announcements. We need them clearly at the table with us so we can collectively decide with our municipal partners on priorities, not making one-off announcements trying to one-up either us or municipal governments.

We have a lot of work ahead of us. The work continues. This province is resilient. We will continue to do well, and I look forward to continuing the work we do here in this Legislature.

**Mr. Tim Hudak:** One thing that we do know is that after an election, Dalton McGuinty and his promises are soon parted. In fact, it's almost 24 hours later that he begins breaking his promises, and people are seeing the results, particularly when it comes to health care.

I recently had the chance to visit Strathroy and did a round table with the chamber of commerce and local taxpayers. Monte McNaughton, a business leader in the area, helped organize the event. People noted how concerned they were about the state of health care, specifically services at the Strathroy Middlesex General Hospital in Strathroy and Four Counties Health Services in nearby Newbury. For example, three long-term-care beds have been taken out of service at SMGH in an attempt to help with a projected \$2.2-million operating deficit, according to executive officer Mike Mazza. That is certainly not what Dalton McGuinty or his local candidate promised in the recent provincial election.

Mazza also notes that taking the beds out of service ultimately caused a backup of patients into emergency. The SMGH board of governors has approved a plan to look at further reducing services.



At nearby Four Counties hospital, one of the smallest hospitals in the province, just a few weeks ago, in a devastating blow to its community, Four Counties announced it is being forced to close its 38-year-old outpatient physiotherapy program in an attempt to balance its budget—a 38-year-old program being forced to close by McGuinty government policies. This means that many of the town's 23,000 rural and elderly residents served by Four Counties Health Services will now have to travel farther and pay from their own pockets to replace those services. Instead of putting taxpayer dollars into front-line services, they're going into middle management, like these new LHINs that are a new layer of bureaucracy, as opposed to front-line care. I do note that the CEO for the southwest LHIN, Tony Woolgar, was paid a handsome \$241,626 this past fiscal year, a 6% increase over what he got the previous year, as part of a growth to 35 of these individuals making more than \$100,000 per year.

We see similarly in the Niagara peninsula that Dalton McGuinty is breaking promises to seniors and other taxpayers when it comes to health care. The Niagara Health System decided recently to postpone 190 surgical procedures at their Greater Niagara General Hospital in Niagara Falls, contrary to what Dalton McGuinty or his local candidate said in the last election. This ultimately is leading to the closure of operating rooms at Douglas Memorial Hospital in Fort Erie to free up staff and equipment for GNGH. However, that kind of band-aid solution is not supported by doctors and surgeons, because you can't take nurses and equipment from one hospital to another. Ultimately, that's a cut in service and certainly not what taxpayers expected if they had cast their ballots for Dalton McGuinty.

Sadly, as well, doctor shortages in Niagara are the highest in the province, with 95 vacancies in the region for GPs, including 26 vacancies in Niagara Falls, 20 in St. Catharines, nine in Fort Erie, two in Niagara-on-the-Lake and, in my neck of the woods, in west Niagara, nine vacancies, and four in Pelham—not exactly what Dalton McGuinty promised in the last campaign; in fact, quite the opposite. Meanwhile, the local LHIN for our area is paying their CEO \$266,831. That's a 13% increase over what she made the previous year. I think people in Niagara would rather see those funds going to front-line care, doctors and nurses, than paying more bureaucrats at these LHINs.

We're also seeing potential school closures like the Niagara District Secondary School. The only high school in Niagara-on-the-Lake could very well permanently shut its doors on August 31, 2009, forcing 400 students to bus to St. Catharines to find their education. We all know that in Waterdown, the Waterdown District High School has 1,300 students and has 17 portables, among the highest in the province.

People rightly wonder where their tax dollars are going when they see these types of front-line services being cut and fat-cat Liberal bureaucrats and political staffers getting paid big \$100,000-plus salaries.

**Mr. Jeff Leal:** I've been following this debate this afternoon with great interest in the opposition day motion. But I do want to get on the record that on May 9, we'll be opening a brand new hospital in the community of Peterborough, something that we're all looking forward to. Just this last Monday, I had the pleasure of announcing \$29 million for the post-construction plan for the new hospital in Peterborough. That is simply amazing. I want to acknowledge the hard work of the mayor and the private fundraising campaign, my good friend Dave Morton, Jim Devlin and Dan McWilliams, because we've all come together over the last four years. There will be a tremendous celebration on May 9. I ask everybody in this Legislature, including you, Madam Speaker, to join us at 10 a.m. on Friday, May 9. It will be an Ontario-wide celebration to see the kind of commitment that this government has made in health care in the province of Ontario.

I know the health premium has been a difficult thing. I heard from a lot of people, my constituents. But you know, they're seeing the results today: five family health teams that have taken 10,000—repeat, 10,000—people off the waiting list for primary care. Those are results. That's what this government is all about. If you look in our budget, we're going to provide more—

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath):** Thank you. Further debate?

1730

**Mr. Frank Klees:** I'm pleased to participate in this debate on behalf of my constituents in Newmarket-Aurora. I want to speak in support of this motion and specifically to the failure of the McGuinty government to develop and implement long-term plans for infrastructure renewal and transportation.

Dalton McGuinty and his ministers seem to favour the back-of-the-napkin approach to planning, and unfortunately my constituents are being left to pay the price. The residents of York region are forced to deal with crumbling infrastructure and clogged roads as a result. But the fact is that York region is being ignored by the McGuinty government. The fact is that this government has perfected the art of political spin and dog-and-pony media announcements.

There are many examples of this government turning its back on York region, but I want to draw attention to the fact that two major transportation projects have been abandoned by this government. The result will be more gridlock, a loss of quality of life and a threat to the economic viability of the region. Those two projects relate to the Bradford bypass and the extension of the 404 beyond Ravenshoe. These are two projects that had been prioritized by the previous PC government. They're strongly endorsed by the local region. Because York region is such a rapidly growing area, the importance of these transportation projects is noted by our government previously, and here is what is so disturbing today.

This government boasts of being able to bring forward new announcements, and we have an announcement of \$500,000 one day, and \$1 million the next. Of course, as



residents read about these announcements, they believe that all is well. The fact is that it is not. York region chairperson Bill Fisch had this to say about these two projects not being included in the priority plans of this government:

"The fact that the route isn't even on the map, quite literally, in the province's Places to Grow legislation is simply unacceptable.

"Long delays in planning for the construction of the bypass have led to increased traffic congestion on arterial roads and a constant overburdening of concessions, side roads and rural routes that were never designed to handle the high volumes of traffic they now must accommodate on a daily basis. The route is of more necessity now than ever and one that can't afford to remain in legislative limbo much longer."

Those were comments by the regional chair.

Here is the question that I have for the government: Where are the Liberal members of this Legislature who represent the rest of York region? They are here but they are under a code of silence. We hear nothing from them. Not one word has been spoken in this Legislature by any of the other members of this Legislature who are either Liberal cabinet ministers or backbenchers. Why are they not speaking out on behalf of York region? Where is their voice on behalf of the people who elected them and expected them to stand up for the needs of York region? My colleague Julia Munro and I are here today to say to this government that we will not allow you to turn your backs on the people of York region. And if your members, the Liberals members, aren't prepared to stand up now on behalf of those constituents, Ms. Munro and I will, and we're doing that today. The very least that members of this government can do is to vote in favour of this resolution so that the Premier will understand that there are serious needs in infrastructure in the province of Ontario.

**Mr. John Yakabuski:** I too am pleased to rise in support of this motion in the Legislature today. We heard a lot of awful stuff on the other side today about the creation of jobs in Ontario. They like to bandy about a number of 450,000 or something like that.

They don't want to talk about the over 190,000 jobs, good manufacturing jobs, that have been lost in this province under the McGuinty regime just since 2004. They want to talk about the jobs they've created in the automotive industry that I heard about from the member from Oakville. Over half the jobs that have been created under this government are in the bureaucracy itself. They say, "Oh, this party here wants to see cuts to services." Absolutely not. But we do want to see a government that is accountable and recognizes that it is not a feather in your cap simply to spend money. It is a great accomplishment if you get results.

In your own home, Madam Speaker, you don't have an unlimited supply of money. You've got to get results on whatever the budget allows you. You don't have \$5.2-billion surpluses showing up at the end of the year. Where was the planning—we talk about the lack of

planning—for this \$5.2 billion? I'm very pleased with the money that we received in my municipalities in my riding, but where was the planning? What municipalities are asking for is a sustainable plan in the province of Ontario, not ad hoc spending at the end of the year. When you have money that has to be thrown out the door in a very quick fashion, you don't necessarily spend it in the best way.

I know there's a formula, but I submit that the formula does not really address the priorities. For example, a formula that says, "Based on kilometrage of roads and the population, this is how we're going to divvy up the money for roads and bridges in the province of Ontario"—you also have to look at the needs of the communities. When you don't have plans, you just throw it out on a formula.

In my county of Renfrew, our roads deteriorate much faster than roads in southern Ontario that could be years and years older but are still in good shape. So you don't just base it on kilometrage and population; you actually have to base it on the conditions and the need so that if you've got a sustainable and a long-term plan, you'd be actually looking at that need.

We also have to look at the needs in key industries in certain areas. In my area, in Renfrew county, the forestry industry is hurting and suffering under the McGuinty regime. Was there any help for the forestry people in this McGuinty budget? No. When you have \$5.2-billion of surplus spending, if you had planned and thought about it and actually went out and listened to the concerns that were registered at the pre-budget hearings that went on across this province, and not just find a way in the last week of the budget—"How can we get this money out the door as quickly as possible?" If you had planned, you would've been able to come up with a solution.

You've got the money. People in this province ask themselves, "How does a government that has \$96 billion at its disposal"—and that's what this government has: \$96 billion, up from \$68 billion when they took power. "How does a government that has that kind of money at its disposal still have a situation where we have longer lines in our emergencies, where we are cancelling surgeries because beds are blocked because we haven't supported our long-term-care homes?"

These are the kinds of problems that are creeping up in this province. Eventually, as they say, it's going to come back to haunt them, because this government is not addressing those problems. They're throwing out the money in a way that they get the maximum bang for the publicity buck.

Let's talk about skills-to-jobs. I saw an ad last night on their new skills-to-jobs plan. I'd like to know how much they've spent on the advertising, but in that spanky ad on Global Television, part of it was that there was a plane in it. I noticed the plane. That's important, because when those people are trained, they're going to be getting on the next plane or the next train and heading out to Alberta for a job because this government has done absolutely nothing to create the climate that will offer these people



jobs once they're retrained. Those are some of the concerns.

**Hon. Jim Watson:** What about forestry?

**Mr. John Yakabuski:** The Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing says he wants to talk about forestry. We could talk about forestry until, as they say, the cows come home. Your lack of support and your lack of recognition to the forestry industry—

**Hon. Jim Watson:** On a point of order, Madam Speaker: I'd like to point out that the Tory motion does not include the word "forestry," so I think they've turned their back on that industry.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath):** The member for Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke.

**Mr. John Yakabuski:** In this motion we tried to encompass everything, but we didn't have enough paper. Domtar doesn't print enough paper to list all of the mistakes and problems that have been created under this government, so we had to shorten it just a bit.

1740

For the benefit of the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing: We didn't cover it all, but when it comes to breaking promises, nobody covers the ground like Dalton McGuinty. We've heard from different speakers today about the number of times that he has broken his promise since being elected Premier.

I want to keep my remarks short and wrap up by saying: Let's remember that one of the most important things to municipalities in this province is a long-term commitment to sustainable funding that is fairly spread and with a formula that addresses the needs of municipalities fairly across this province. That's where this government has failed, that's why this government is on the economic wrong track, and that's why all of the forecasters tell them that they're on the wrong track, but they don't seem to see the forest for the trees.

**Mrs. Julia Munro:** I'm pleased to be able to take the last few moments and respond to this resolution. Our motion reflects the concerns that we share with many, many Ontarians. People want to know that their government has a vision and, as a result of that vision, has built a plan and identified strategies to carry out that vision. But not by this government; no, instead, there is no long-term plan to ensure the economic well-being of Ontario. Rather, Ontario is at risk of becoming a have-not province.

People understand that there are external forces. They understand the question of the dollar, they understand the decline of American markets for Canadian goods and they understand that there is a variety of external pressures. However, they do expect that their government is going to have a plan to minimize these external pressures. That is what is behind the motion that we are debating here today: the lack of a plan. Instead, we see almost 200,000 manufacturing jobs lost. We see a looming energy crisis. We also see, constantly throughout people's individual private lives as well as their business lives, increasing red tape.

When I look around in my own riding of York—Simcoe, I'm caught immediately by the fact that there's an infrastructure deficit. People in Cedar Point who want water and sewers, the many, many constituents of mine who must get on the overcrowded arteries that were built years and years ago—they are not up to date with the kind of growth that we've seen. Highways like the 404 and the Bradford bypass are highways that are essential to eliminating that kind of gridlock.

In York region, I am joined by the member for Thornhill and the member from Newmarket—Aurora in recognizing the inequity of the delivery of human services. There, again, is a demonstration of the lack of a plan. All of our human services function on a per capita value way below that of the provincial average.

It's those kinds of things that make the people I represent believe that this government has no plan.

Last year, economic growth in Ontario was the lowest in the country. Ontario has the slowest growth in private sector job creation in Canada. Think of it: Ontario is behind every other province in Canada.

There is one place, however, where we are ahead, and that would be in taxes on new businesses. Ontario has the highest tax rate on new business investment in Canada. Wouldn't a responsible government draw up a plan to deal with our economic problems? Shouldn't a government that cared put in policies that help businesses create jobs?

When will this government start to take meaningful and effective action? Ontario cannot afford to wait until we enter a recession. We need action now, before thousands more lose jobs, before more businesses close, before Ontario becomes a have-not province.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath):** Mr. Runciman has moved that, in the opinion of this House, the McGuinty Liberal government's failures to develop and implement effective long-range plans to ensure the economic well-being of Ontario have led the province to the brink of "have not" status and placed in jeopardy our ability to support cherished services such as health and long-term care, the environment, infrastructure renewal, education, transportation, tourism development, secure and affordable energy supplies, safe communities and agriculture.

It's addressed to the Premier of Ontario.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

I believe the nays have it.

Please call in the members. This will be a 10-minute bell.

*The division bells rang from 1746 to 1756.*

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath):** Mr. Runciman has moved opposition day motion number 1. All those in favour, please rise.

#### Ayes

Arnott, Ted  
Bailey, Robert

Hudak, Tim  
Jones, Sylvia

O'Toole, John  
Ouellette, Jerry J.



Barrett, Toby  
Bisson, Gilles  
Chudleigh, Ted  
Elliott, Christine  
Hardeman, Ernie  
Hillier, Randy

Klees, Frank  
MacLeod, Lisa  
Martiniuk, Gerry  
Miller, Norm  
Miller, Paul  
Munro, Julia

Runciman, Robert W.  
Savoline, Joyce  
Scott, Laurie  
Shurman, Peter  
Wilson, Jim  
Yakubski, John

Craitor, Kim  
Crozier, Bruce  
Delaney, Bob  
Dhillon, Vic  
Dickson, Joe

McNeely, Phil  
Milloy, John  
Mitchell, Carol  
Moridi, Reza  
Naqvi, Yasir

Watson, Jim  
Wilkinson, John  
Zimmer, David

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath):** All those opposed to the motion will please rise.

**The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller):** The ayes are 24; the nays are 49.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath):** I declare the motion lost.

*Negated.*

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath):** It being almost 6 of the clock, this House will stand adjourned until 6:45 p.m.

*The House adjourned at 1759.*

*Evening meeting reported in volume B.*

#### Nays

Albanese, Laura  
Arthurs, Wayne  
Bartolucci, Rick  
Bentley, Christopher  
Best, Margaret  
Bradley, James J.  
Brotten, Laurel C.  
Brown, Michael A.  
Brownell, Jim  
Caplan, David  
Chan, Michael  
Colle, Mike

Dombrowsky, Leona  
Duguid, Brad  
Duncan, Dwight  
Flynn, Kevin Daniel  
Hoy, Pat  
Kular, Kuldip  
Kwinter, Monte  
Lalonde, Jean-Marc  
Leal, Jeff  
Levac, Dave  
Mangat, Amrit  
Matthews, Deborah

Oraziotti, David  
Pendergast, Leeanna  
Phillips, Gerry  
Qadri, Shafiq  
Ramal, Khalil  
Ramsay, David  
Sandals, Liz  
Sergio, Mario  
Smith, Monique  
Smitherman, George  
Sousa, Charles  
Van Bommel, Maria

**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO**  
**ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO**

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenant-gouverneur: Hon. / L'hon. David C. Onley, O.Ont.

Speaker / Président: Hon. / L'hon. Steve Peters

Clerk / Greffière: Deborah Deller

Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Lisa Freedman, Tonia Grannum

Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Aggelonitis, Sophia (L)	Hamilton Mountain	
Albanese, Laura (L)	York South–Weston / York-Sud–Weston	
<b>Arnott, Ted (PC)</b>	Wellington–Halton Hills	First Deputy Chair of the committee of the whole House / Premier Vice-Président du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Arthurs, Wayne (L)	Pickering–Scarborough East / Pickering–Scarborough-Est	
Bailey, Robert (PC)	Sarnia–Lambton	
Balkissoon, Bas (L)	Scarborough–Rouge River	
Barrett, Toby (PC)	Haldimand–Norfolk	
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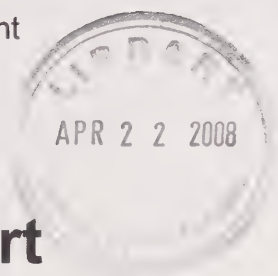
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of Ontario**

First Session, 39<sup>th</sup> Parliament

**Assemblée législative  
de l'Ontario**

Première session, 39<sup>e</sup> législature



**Official Report  
of Debates  
(Hansard)**

**Journal  
des débats  
(Hansard)**

**Wednesday 16 April 2008**

**Mercredi 16 avril 2008**

Speaker  
Honourable Steve Peters

Président  
L'honorable Steve Peters

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# LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 16 April 2008

# ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 16 avril 2008

*The House met at 1845.*

## ORDERS OF THE DAY

### HEALTHY FOOD FOR HEALTHY SCHOOLS ACT, 2008

### LOI DE 2008 PORTANT SUR UNE ALIMENTATION SAINTE POUR DES ÉCOLES SAINES

Ms. Wynne moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 8, An Act to amend the Education Act / Projet de loi 8, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'éducation.

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier):** Ms. Wynne has moved third reading of Bill 8. Minister?

**Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne:** I rise today for third reading of the proposed Healthy Food for Healthy Schools Act, 2008. I want to acknowledge the work of my parliamentary assistant, the member for Guelph, in shepherding this legislation through the committee process. There were some technical amendments that were made to it. There was a good discussion of the substance of the bill.

The health of the children and young people in this province should matter to all of us, and I know that it does. I can tell you it certainly matters to us. We take it very seriously. We know that schools are one place where those healthy habits can be established.

For some people, their health may already be at risk. The level of obesity among young Canadian children has nearly tripled over the last 25 years. In 2004, a study released by Statistics Canada showed that nearly one third of children and teenagers in Canada are either overweight or obese.

This is really worrying information. The facts are pretty grim. We know that people who are obese are more likely to develop illnesses such as type 2 diabetes, cardiovascular disease and cancer. From my perspective as the Minister of Education, those children may not have the energy they need to be able to learn. So that's a critical part of this discussion. Obesity can also lead to high blood pressure and high cholesterol levels, as well as breathing problems and joint pain. We know that all of that can also lead to young people having low self-esteem.

We know that's not the future we want for students in Ontario; it's not the future we want for families in Ontario. Families want their children to grow up healthy

and successful. We know that that is the desire of all families in Ontario, and that's what we want as well.

Another recent study by the Public Health Agency of Canada showed that less than half of Canadian students in grades 6 to 12 have fruits and vegetables at least once a day. Most students, in other words, do not. Most of the students this study surveyed did not have a piece of fruit or a single vegetable in a day. I think this is really worrying information. The study also shows a continued increase in obesity among young people. So it's not just that there is a static number of young people in our society who are obese, but that number is going up.

C'est un problème grave qui exige une attention immédiate. C'est pourquoi nous devons agir maintenant. Nous voulons que les élèves soient en bonne santé et prêts à apprendre et nous voulons que les élèves apprennent dans un milieu scolaire sain.

We need a healthy school environment for these students to grow in. The kids in our schools are our future. We know that they are the future workers in this province; they are our investment in the future. That's why this proposed legislation is so important.

Students are less likely to be tired or stressed and less likely to get sick when they're eating healthy foods. They are more likely to feel energetic and be able to focus on learning. Providing them with healthier options would not only help to protect their health now, but it's going to help them in the future to develop those habits of healthy eating that I spoke of. Who knows? Kids may take those lessons home. It's my experience that students teach their families, so I think we have a way into the families in the province by changing the habits of kids at school.

**1850**

Students should be able to line up in a school cafeteria and choose a lunch that doesn't contain high levels of trans fat. That should be an option for kids. When they're looking for a snack in the afternoon, they should have options available to them that aren't high in sugar or fat. That's what this proposed legislation is about. The proposed Healthy Food for Healthy Schools Act, 2008, would drop prescribed amounts of trans fats from food and beverages sold in schools.

Industrially produced trans fat is created when liquid oils are manufactured into a semi-solid form like margarine or shortening. They're not naturally occurring in all foods, but when they're manufactured, they create this dangerous substance that raises blood levels of bad cholesterol and lowers blood levels of good cholesterol,



and these are the effects that are associated with increased coronary heart disease.

Unfortunately, many foods contain trans fat. Research also shows that trans fatty acids are not essential and provide no benefit to human health. So if we can provide healthier options in schools and reduce the amount of trans fat that students consume, even at school, that can help improve the health of our young people. That's why it's so important that we don't sit by and not take action. We have to take action.

Recently, a University of Minnesota study found that school lunch sales do not decline when healthier meals are served. I think if we put the expectation out that kids will take up healthier habits, they will do that, but we have to set the framework. We have to set the context in which kids make those decisions. The same study found that nutritious lunches don't necessarily cost schools more to produce. So those arguments that, "Well, the kids aren't going to take those options," or "It's going to cost more," actually don't bear out in the research.

We've made it clear that there will be exemptions for special-event days, because there is always that day when a parent brings something to school for a child's birthday or an event or there's a special lunch day. Those days would be exempted if they are not a regular occurrence, if they're infrequent. They will be exempted. We know that kids look forward to those and we wouldn't suggest that those should be changed.

We also know that we would need to exempt dairy and meat products like beef that contain naturally occurring trans fats. We're not suggesting that where natural trans fats are found in foods, we would be removing those foods from the cafeteria.

This is a reasonable approach. This puts in place a reasonable framework that is going to move our kids' eating habits closer to being the healthy ones that we want them to have.

These healthy menu choices would align with the new Canada's Food Guide, and we'd be working with registered dietitians, public health organizations, food providers and the education sector to develop those standards.

This proposed move has very wide support. My parliamentary assistant, the member for Guelph, found that at the committee there was a lot of support for this legislation because people can see the efficacy of it. They can see why it makes sense for kids in the schools.

Earlier this week, we announced the recipients of the 2007-08 Premier's Awards for Teaching Excellence. One of those recipients was Paul Finkelstein, a teacher at Stratford Northwestern Secondary School. Thanks to his efforts, students at the school now have an opportunity to learn about using locally grown produce and how to prepare healthy meals through the Screaming Avocado Café. That highlights two of our initiatives: The healthy food initiative and the buy local initiative that we think is very important. It's been a great success. The café he started now serves over 250 students a day. He also created an organic vegetable garden that contributes to the café.

What we know is that through those experiences, kids can learn what the options are through being part of that kind of change within their school. We also know that through the curriculum, students learn about healthy living and can learn more, including the expectations on the importance of healthy and balanced eating.

We know that if we work with the people in the sector who understand how to transform habits and understand what the guidelines should be—the Dietitians of Canada and the Dairy Farmers of Canada—they will tell us that, for example, the availability of higher-fat and sugary treats in schools poses a challenge for school-aged kids to eat well. They know; they've looked at the patterns in schools and they can guide us as we ask for this cultural shift, because that is really what we're asking for. We're asking for schools to partner with us in changing the culture of eating in their institutions. In doing that, we start to shift the culture of eating in our kids' homes, so I think that it's a really important step. It's an important message to our schools that we want to work with them and that we're going to support them in this.

What we did in 2004 was put in place a voluntary ban on junk food in elementary schools. We found that there was a very systematic uptake of that ban. Those voluntary standards were widely accepted by elementary schools across the province because the schools knew it was the right thing to do. It wasn't that there had to be a prescriptive or punitive piece of policy that was put in place. It was a voluntary ban. They took up the policy and they ran with it because they knew that was the right direction to go.

Dropping trans—

*Interjection.*

**Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne:** Leeanna was. As a member who was in an elementary school at the time, that's right, she was very, very helpful.

Dropping trans fats and providing healthier options in schools just makes sense. The well-being of our young people is at stake in this. It is the right thing to do. We know that we have broad support across the education system to do this, and we look forward to working with all of our partners to make sure that our kids have the healthiest choices possible.

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier):** Questions and comments? Further debate?

**Mrs. Joyce Savoline:** I will be splitting my time today with my colleague the member from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke and also my colleague from Durham.

I stand here today in support of the government's trans fat bill, despite the fact that the McGuinty government was unable to work in the spirit of non-partisanship on my private member's Bill 42. I, however, have chosen to take the high road.

Bill 42 was, I might add, an important piece of legislation that closed a loophole in this government's own anti-smoking law. Clearly the McGuinty government's anti-smoking legislation has more holes in it than Swiss cheese, since elementary students are buying illegal cigarettes every day in Caledonia smoke shacks. It is clear



that the McGuinty government has a lack of understanding and respect for the rule of law in Ontario.

The trans fat bill makes good sense in principle, but like all Liberal policy it is a policy in isolation. The root issues of childhood obesity are being addressed in a one-off fashion, not in relationship to a comprehensive or multi-faceted approach to making a significant movement in childhood obesity statistics that we have here in Ontario.

Childhood obesity has increased as our children have become more sedentary in their lives. At the same time that this bill is being introduced tonight, pools are slated for closure in the Toronto District School Board. As we speak, the TDSB is debating pool closures. One would consider that an aquatics program, in combination with a healthy diet, is a multi-faceted approach. The McGuinty government saw fit to invest in school pool programs in 2006-07 through the Ministry of Health Promotion, but at this time, in this legislative session, the Ministry of Health Promotion has turned a blind eye. Why has this government not taken this opportunity to present a well-rounded physical education program to complement the trans fat legislation?

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The Heart and Stroke Foundation promotes the importance of a healthy low-fat diet in combination with regular physical exercise. Exercise is habit-forming. Studies have shown that it takes two weeks to turn an exercise regime into an exercise habit. Surely the McGuinty government could spend two weeks on a prevention initiative to hook our kids on a healthy lifestyle.

That has not been the only issue that the noticeably silent Minister of Health Promotion has turned a blind eye to. Once again, my Bill 42 was designed to stop children from being exposed to the harmful effects of second-hand marijuana smoke. At present, I and my family can enter our favourite restaurant through a cloud of pot, and that is okay with the Minister of Health Promotion.

I know that's okay with the minister because her fellow caucus members were instructed to shut down my bill before public hearings could even occur. Why is the McGuinty government afraid to allow a party other than their own to produce legislation, and why are they so afraid to hear from the public in whose interest they are supposed to be acting? Not only should we be trying to protect our children from the effects of second-hand smoke, but we should be setting an example for them. It is not acceptable to smoke cigarettes in the entrance of a restaurant. It is definitely not okay to smoke marijuana in the entrance of a restaurant. It sounds really simple to me. I expect our government to be consistent and apply the law uniformly across the board.

As chairman of Halton region, I focused heavily on building relationships and engaging the community to meet the challenges and capitalize on the opportunities that lay before us. The trans fat bill could have been just that kind of opportunity. It could have been part of an overhaul of a health promotion strategy for all of our

youth. Unfortunately, "strategy" is not an action word embraced by the McGuinty government. As I mentioned previously in the House, I sincerely hope that the government creates a comprehensive communication strategy that accompanies this bill when and if it becomes law.

Children do not respond to rules and policies just because someone told them to do it. As a matter of fact, they usually rebel when being told but will, over time, respond to an inclusive campaign created within their education and with their best interests at heart.

There are some remarkable parent-driven initiatives in our schools today that focus on getting youth excited and involved in making good nutritional choices for their future. The parent committees engage our preteens in the recipe process. They work with the students' personal food tastes to develop a well-balanced standard menu for snacks and meals that they can prepare themselves. This program is showing great promise because it is not top-down but a collaborative approach that will achieve lasting results for our young people.

I have mentioned previously in this House the importance of teaching life skills along with curriculum so that when our children set out on their own, they make wise choices and begin to take ownership of their own lifestyle and their own health. The life skills I'm referring to are fundamental basics in managing one's own finances, providing proper nutritional guidance and so on. Teaching life skills will ensure that our children have the tools to meet domestic and financial challenges. They will meet them head-on and avoid the pitfalls of poor diet and the credit issues that take years to overcome.

I would offer that it's in the interest of this government to increase their prevention scope and successfully engage our youth in developing the nutritional building blocks for a strong, healthy future.

Childhood obesity leads to an increased risk of adult-onset diabetes, heart disease and, of course, stroke. Imagine the reduced burden on our health care system if we nip these problems in the bud. Rarely as legislators do we have the opportunity to take preventive action. So often are we called to react to a situation, to react to a crisis or to try to close a loophole, that it's great to be able to stand here and suggest ways in which we can actively and positively change the future health of our young Ontarians. So rarely are the comments of the opposition valued and embraced by the McGuinty government, as Minister Bryant's proposed changes to the standing orders clearly demonstrated.

The issues of childhood obesity and trans fat need to be discussed, as I mentioned, in conjunction with a physical fitness regime and by engaging the students in proactive measures for their own health.

I believe, also, that it's important that women—mothers—present in this Legislature should be here to discuss issues like this that are meaningful to our children's future. Should Minister Bryant's cabinet-friendly changes to the standing orders become law, we will have fewer and fewer women in this Legislature debating



issues that are key to our children's health and well-being. That is not to say that my male caucus members cannot carry their own skates in this regard. What I am saying is that we're looking for a balance. We're looking for both men and women to bring that important perspective to contribute to family-oriented legislation. If this Legislature is debating issues that are key for our children, then both mothers and fathers should be present to debate the merits and discuss the challenges and act in the best interests of our kids.

I challenge the members opposite to veer from their partisan playbook for just a moment and tell me what you really think about the flawed proposal for the revised standing orders.

**Mr. Bob Delaney:** On a point of order, Mr. Speaker—

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier):** Order. Member, take your seat. I'm obliged by the standing orders to remind the member that we are debating a bill about trans fats and that we must try our best to stay with the debate on that issue.

**Mrs. Joyce Savoline:** I would like to be in this place, a place where women and men will have a joint opportunity to debate issues, like the trans fat legislation, that affect our families and communities, on an equal basis.

I will support this trans fat bill, and I hope that it will be accompanied by the all-embracing physical activities and awareness campaign that will be necessary to make this successful and not just window dressing.

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier):** The member for Hamilton East–Stoney Creek.

**Mr. Paul Miller:** I also rise today in a spirit of co-operation. Unfortunately, I share the member from Burlington's problem, where my bill, which was a good bill protecting people's severances and back pay and things, was shut down at committee level. Unfortunately, that didn't go through, either.

My colleague will be sharing two minutes of my time. Because he can't be here tonight, I'm just going to read a short statement from him and then get into mine.

My colleague the member from Trinity–Spadina, Rosario Marchese, has to be at the Toronto District School Board meeting this evening to try to protect school pools from this government's inaction. But if he were here, he would speak to this bill, Bill 53, An Act to amend the Consumer Protection Act, 2002, with respect to the advertising of food or drink. His bill would actually protect children, not just use quaint terms like—

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier):** Member, please take your seat. We're not going to discuss another bill. I don't know what Bill 53 is; we're discussing Bill 8 this evening. I would ask that all members stick to that debate.

**Mr. Paul Miller:** With all due respect, this bill was actually tied in. The final statement would have been definite words like "eliminate trans fats." It was part of it; there is a connection. I'm sorry. I will get into more of the meat of the situation.

It's no surprise that yet again the legislation being introduced by the McGuinty government promises more

in title than it actual delivers in content, detail or commitment. The title of the proposed legislation we are debating tonight is Healthy Food for Healthy Schools. That sounds incredibly promising. We can all agree that both body and mind must be well fed with a wholesome and nutritious attitude. What better place to ensure this combination than in our schools? But upon close reading and careful examination of this bill, this legislation does not come close to ensuring this.

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We know that in addressing the magnitude of the health crisis—I think it would be safe to say it is even at epidemic levels of obesity among our young people, among the children of the province—we have to take a strong approach. This is the future of Ontario we're talking about.

Much like the food our children are consuming in school cafeterias and through school vending machines, the bill comes up incredibly short on substance. Contrary to popular perception, this bill does not ban junk food and does not ban trans fats. The bill amends the Education Act to add provisions regulating the trans fat content of all food and beverages sold in school cafeterias, with regulated exemptions for food or beverages in which the trans fat content originates exclusively from meat or dairy products.

The bill also adds a requirement for boards to ensure that food and beverages sold in vending machines comply with the nutritional standards set out in the regulations, giving the power to the Minister of Education to create policies, guidelines and regulations governing nutritional standards for all food and beverages provided on school premises or in connection with a school-related activity.

What this legislation proposes to do is merely give power to begin a set of regulations, not to take the immediate and obvious action required. There's no time for delay on this issue. The time for action and enforcement is now. We should not kid ourselves—no pun intended. This is a frighteningly pressing issue.

Child obesity: We have heard and are familiar with what should be alarming and unbelievable statistics, but they are, unfortunately, the case. One quarter of Canadian children are either overweight or obese. In Ontario alone, about one in four of our children aged two to 17 are overweight. Close to half of Ontario adults are obese. Among children aged seven to 13, obesity tripled over a 15-year period. According to the Ministry of Health Promotion, obesity costs Ontario \$1.6 billion annually.

The Ontario College of Physicians and Surgeons has said, "This is the first generation that may not outlive their parents due to health-related illnesses." Ontario Medical Association, or OMA, reports show that over the past two decades, child obesity rates have increased significantly. Obese children are 12 times more likely than their peers to develop type 2 diabetes and are more prone as they get older to suffer from high blood pressure and high cholesterol levels. They will also be more susceptible to cancer, bone problems, asthma, gallbladder prob-



lems and early death. With such a situation, we need to be very determined and meaningful in our approach.

**Trans fats:** In these cases, trans fats is certainly a factor. The recommended daily take of trans fats is zero, and only one gram of trans fats daily can increase the risk of heart disease by 20%. To provide some perspective, on average, Canadians ingest about 10 grams daily. That is just the average Canadian.

There has been a frightening awareness of the danger of trans fats, and as such, the federal government has passed a law ensuring clear labelling in regards to trans fats. Strict specifications are required to have permission to label a food "trans fat free." This has been combined with raising awareness around the issue of trans fats—a huge step towards better health.

Three years ago, the Ontario Medical Association called for restrictions on nutrient-poor foods for students while in the care of school boards. However, many foods which have no trans fats or which are limiting trans fats would scarcely be described as healthy options. Some of these include Oreos, Doritos, Cheetos and Hershey's Kisses.

Regulating trans fats, even to the point of elimination, is not the same as actually banning unhealthy food. Fat content, sugar content, sodium content, colours and preservatives all produce calories. All the nutritional information must be examined when considering the food our children eat.

This act would have us believe that the regulation or elimination of trans fats means no more unhealthy food, when that is just not the case.

**A junk food ban:** As my colleague from Trinity-Spadina has mentioned numerous times before, the McGuinty government made much pomp and circumstance out of an announcement three years ago banning junk food, under then-Education Minister Gerard Kennedy, an announcement that was just merely that—words—the results of which can barely be seen three years later, if at all.

Cash-strapped schools rely on revenues from snack foods, especially at the secondary education level—even at the elementary level, if no longer through a vending machine, then at a tuck shop or snack cart. At what expense? At the expense of our children's health, that's what the expense is. To the government, I implore: What kind of junk food ban is that?

You cannot dispute hard-working individuals like Maggie Cavalier, who owns and operates a forward-thinking business called Food Sense Healthy Vending Services and visits numerous schools in helping them make healthy, cost-effective choices. On her visit to Queen's Park, she shared with the committee that through her work experience being in those schools, she sees that there are no more demonstrable junk food bans in schools. Ms. Cavalier, also a grandmother with a grandson who is struggling with health issues—some diet-related—is deeply concerned that the school vending machines sell junk food. If we know the effect on the health of young Ontarians due to consuming these fatty,

sugary, calorie-laden snacks, let's really set an example and say, "No junk food in our schools," through binding, well-enforced legislation.

**School food funding:** But this is not to leave our school boards out in the cold. There needs to be a determination to find appropriate ways to properly fund our schools, so that we are not selling out our children's health or trading it off for other essentials like intramural sports, art activities or other school programming. The representative for the Centre for Science in the Public Interest, Bill Jeffrey, outlined that real investments need to be made in school food and beverages for the sake of health and a full learning experience, as other jurisdictions have done. To quote Mr. Jeffrey in drawing these comparisons, "Ontario's investment in school foods was approximately two cents per day per student. It's recently doubled, so now four cents per day per student. That compares, as you can see, very unfavourably to about \$1 a day per student in the United States."

Further, right here in Canada, and I quote Mr. Jeffrey again, "In British Columbia, that level of funding is now up to \$23 per student, and they have plans for a massive increase. So the British Columbia government, at least in this regard, is a bright light...." Such investments allow for boards to proceed without fear in getting rid of junk food and unhealthy choices. There are healthy food alternatives that are instead explored for vending machines and nutritious food that can be prepared in a timely fashion, to be served in cafeterias at affordable prices.

**Healthy food choices and physical activity:** I'd like to look at physical activity, an important part of any Canadian's life. Speaking of intramurals and sports activities, as many organizations and individuals have shared with members of this Legislature, they are essential to ensuring that we really have healthy schools and healthy future generations in the province. The NDP does acknowledge the effort in this legislation to address the food and beverage options in our schools. This is despite the reality that specifics of the proposed legislation fall woefully short. However, we acknowledge that the food and beverage options are one part—of course, an integral part, but just one part—of addressing a broad-based problem.

Physical activity is another key to the puzzle that this legislation would have done well to look at. Yes, there are 20 minutes of daily activity that are required, but that's not enough to create healthy environments and lifelong good lifestyle habits. Dr. Janice Willett, president of the OMA, has been on record as saying, "The evidence is clear, obesity rates in children can be significantly decreased with appropriate physical activity and healthy food options."

An equally integral part of the success of any legislation that would seek to deal with the health of young people is to acknowledge the fundamental connection that recreational and physical activity has with overall health and well-being. In creating a healthy environment in our schools, which this legislation claims, New Democrats know that it needs to be in conjunction with initia-



tives that protect and support recreational activity in the community. Schools are at the heart of it. The bill that was introduced yesterday by my colleague from Nickel Belt, Communities at Play, proposed to do just that: to provide supports for those facilities that keep young people active. As someone who has been involved with community recreation activity all my life, I understand how healthy food choices and other healthy lifestyles go hand in hand. Exercise has been a big part of my life.

In conclusion, healthy initiatives that are mandated and supported by government and that really do go all the way, ones that put a full ban in place, such as on trans fat and junk foods in this case; decisions that take essential stands for the positive future of young Ontarians; and proposals that help the boards achieve success in this and that are full in their approach: That is what New Democrats are all about.

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As childhood obesity and, by extension, adult health problems increase, legislation must be dealt with immediately. Healthy food for healthy schools is absolutely what we want to see and have our students experience, but the half measures and window dressing this government likes to announce really don't cut it when it comes to a situation so grave. A healthy future for Ontario requires real commitment. We look forward to continuing to speak out in favour of that.

In conclusion, I'd like to say, with a slight bit of reluctance, we will support this bill.

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier):** Questions and comments? Further debate?

**Mr. John Yakabuski:** I will be sharing my time with the member for York-Simcoe.

It's a pleasure to join the debate tonight on Bill 8, An Act to amend the Education Act, commonly known here as the trans fats bill. I have some comments I want to make with regard to the fact that nobody is against this bill, on any side of the House. It's not about being against what's in this bill; we have some concerns about what's not in the bill, and what the bill fails to do.

I certainly echo the comments of my friend from Hamilton East-Stoney Creek and my colleague from Burlington about the importance of nutrition and the seriousness of the issue of childhood obesity—not just childhood obesity but obesity in general, which is a big threat to our society, quite frankly. If we can start children on the right nutritional habits, that's certainly a positive thing. But it certainly starts before they ever get to school.

I met with people from different stakeholder groups, including the Heart and Stroke Foundation, on this bill, and they described it as a good first step. But they are concerned with the fact that it exempts special-event days, for example. I remember when our kids were in elementary school, there were so many special event-days revolving around food: hot dog day, pizza day, and this day and that day. Quite frankly, I think we leave an awful large gap if we're exempting special-event days from this trans fat legislation.

Let's go back to the genesis of this, to the beginning. This government is the classic case. You know the old political adage: "Find out where the parade is going and get in front of it." That's exactly what this government has done here. They've gotten in front of the parade, because the industry is way ahead of you on this trans fats business. The industry—

*Interruption.*

**Mr. John Yakabuski:** Oh, I think that could be a call for—the train is running to Peterborough.

The industry is way ahead of this government. Where were the guts and the gumption of this government four years ago? Nothing. The industry's way ahead of you. Most of the snacks that children find in plastic bags today are already trans fat free. The industry's moved way ahead of you, which makes this legislation somewhat redundant from that point of view. But as I say, the Heart and Stroke Foundation says it's a good start.

But do you know what? If this government was serious about the health of children, the Minister of Education and the Minister of Health Promotion would be more interested in ensuring that illegal enterprises selling illegal cigarettes within spitting distance of a school would be eliminated and not allowed. There's where they should be taking care of our children's health, around the schools. Because what we're having is kids on bicycles, actually, leaving these illegal smoke shacks with cartons of cigarettes coming in at a dollar a pack. So we've got two crises here: We've got the nutrition crisis for children, childhood obesity; and we've got the threat of smoking—the smoking threat to our children.

This government is taking the easy road. It's introducing trans fat legislation way behind the industry—the industry's way ahead of them—and it's doing nothing to eliminate this tremendous threat to our children's health long-term, and that is these illegal smoke shacks.

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier):** We may be talking about two threats, but tonight we're debating one, and that's trans fats. I ask all the members again to stick to Bill 8, please.

**Mr. John Yakabuski:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I must say that we are getting very little latitude in the House tonight, and if that's the way it's going to be, that's great with me. I have no problem with that. We're going to stick to the bill at hand, Bill 8, trans fats legislation.

I just wanted to repeat that, as the stakeholders have said, it's a good first step, but it doesn't go far enough. It doesn't deal with the real issue of trans fats and access to trans fats in our schools; it's only those for sale and prepared in the cafeteria itself.

I think there's a lot more that can be done. We share, and everybody in this House shares, the commitment that our children are the most important asset we have, and anything we can do to protect and improve their health is a laudable goal. It is a good first step, but there is so much more that can be done. And we'll be there if this government shows some courage and starts doing those things that we were talking about earlier in my speech,



which I won't say again because I'll be ruled out of order. But let's get the job done together.

**Mrs. Julia Munro:** I'm pleased to be able to join the debate tonight. I want to just add a couple of things on the record. These actually come from a meeting I had last week with a representative from the Heart and Stroke Foundation, which is very supportive of the initiative and the ideas behind this bill. They recognize the importance of both diet and exercise, as many others have, in terms of dealing with issues around not only children's health and the crisis of obesity but also obviously with adults as well.

I wanted to spend a moment to just point out two things that I think are very problematic in the way in which this bill will unfold in the practical way. As members know, and certainly as members of the public understand, the notion of eliminating trans fats is one that the private sector has picked up. We fail sometimes to remember how sensitive the private sector is to those kinds of shifts in public opinion or in priorities that the public acquire. In this case, obviously you can go to any grocery store and look at many products that all have a big label on them that says "No trans fats." So we're kind of coming along to this conversation a little bit late. We hustle along to then say, "Wait a minute, we're not going to have trans fats in schools" when the industry, the private sector, has already realized that that's the direction in which they should go.

I think there are a couple of important omissions in this particular piece of legislation, and one of them is the whole issue of vending machines. I want to just go back to the notion of the importance of eliminating trans fats and the importance of putting that in legislation in terms of cafeterias. But the practical reality is that many kids find themselves in the situation of having been a participant in extracurricular activities or having come to school at a point in the day when the cafeteria isn't open, and they then have access to food, through the vending machines, that is not covered by this legislation. So I think it's a point that the government should understand is a huge omission, because people can come into the school during the day, or after school, and the protection that the nanny state has provided has now disappeared because the cafeteria is closed. I think it's an important omission. The other is that it eliminates from the legislation the whole business about special days.

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As members of our caucus have indicated, we will be supporting this, but the two omissions are a demonstration of a hasty piece of legislation that hasn't looked at, "It's okay for the rest of the day out of the vending machine, it's okay on a special day, but out of the cafeteria we're not going to have trans fats." I think this is an important omission that the government should look at as demonstrating that if you're going to do this, if you're going to have a bill and take up all the time of the Legislature in debating trans fats, then perhaps you should be looking particularly at the source of the vending

machines as an avenue for students to be able to undo the good that's contemplated in this piece of legislation.

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier):** Questions and comments? Further debate?

**Mr. John O'Toole:** Out of respect for my constituents in the riding and on behalf of our party, we are actually supporting this bill. The reason for making a point of it is that on a day when they were changing the standing orders, where they're going to expunge any input from the opposition, we're now sitting at night on a bill in third reading that we actually support. I have to make that point to start with.

On a more serious note, in my riding of Durham, we had a very respectable young person come in, Tyler Moon, who is actually the community specialist for the Heart and Stroke Foundation. He brought in some notes on Bill 8, which I took the time to read, out of respect for the time he took to walk into the office and present me with these papers by the Heart and Stroke Foundation with respect to their position on this.

Mrs. Savoline from Burlington made the points that I think need to be made on the bill technically. The member from Hamilton East-Stoney Creek, from the NDP, made a very good point as well with respect to how there are some gaps in the bill. The gaps, quite honestly, are such that we're going to have to have lunch-bag police in our schools by the looks of things. It's like any nanny-state bill by the Liberal government. It's a nanny-state bill, there's no question about it. They're going to have to have lunch-bag police to make sure that if families, perhaps families with insufficient income, are going to send their children to school with an Oreo cookie that could have trans fat—who knows?—that may have to be inspected. That's the next step of a nanny-state attitude towards telling people what to do, when to do it and where to do it.

This, in the second term, is a very good example of that kind of bill. If they had only listened to the Heart and Stroke Foundation's recommendations, that would have made this more inclusive.

I think earlier today, in the opposition day motion, there were some discussions on the plight of where we are today. We see in my riding three hospitals, all of which have serious challenges. We've got the problem of trans fat, which is something we all agree we should try to restrict in our diets. It's an educational issue. But the reality on the ground is that there are serious cuts to health care, and that's what's troubling. This bill, as minor as it is and occupying as much time as it has—and here we are at night. I'm not sure what the purpose was for sitting tonight. To exercise power, and disrespect for the opposition—that's really what it was for—and for the staff here, as well, I might say.

I think we've made our points. With that, thank you very much for this opportunity to represent my constituents in the riding of Durham.

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier):** Questions and comments? Further debate?



Ms. Wynne has moved third reading of Bill 8, An Act to amend the Education Act. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

*Third reading agreed to.*

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier):** Orders of the day.

**Hon. David Caplan:** I move adjournment of the House.

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier):** Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

This House is adjourned until 10 of the clock on Thursday, April 17.

*The House adjourned at 1936.*

**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO**  
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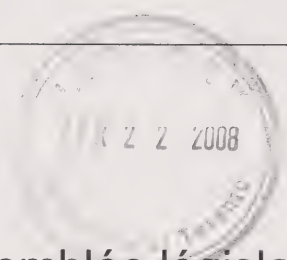
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of Ontario

First Session, 39<sup>th</sup> Parliament

Assemblée législative  
de l'Ontario

Première session, 39<sup>e</sup> législature

# Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

# Journal des débats (Hansard)

Thursday 17 April 2008

Jeudi 17 avril 2008

Speaker  
Honourable Steve Peters

Président  
L'honorable Steve Peters

Clerk  
Deborah Deller

Greffière  
Deborah Deller



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## LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Thursday 17 April 2008

## ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 17 avril 2008

*The House met at 1000.  
Prayers.*

### PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

#### STRANDHERD-ARMSTRONG BRIDGE

**Ms. Lisa MacLeod:** I move that, in the opinion of this House, the Ontario Liberal government should immediately enter into negotiations with the city of Ottawa in order to provide assistance to finally build the Strandherd-Armstrong bridge.

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier):** Ms. MacLeod has moved private member's notice of motion number 3.

Pursuant to standing order 96, you have up to 10 minutes. The floor is yours.

**Ms. Lisa MacLeod:** I rise today to fight for my constituents. The people of Nepean-Carleton returned me to Queen's Park because they know that I mean what I say and I say what I mean. They know that I will fight tooth and nail for them in the Legislature, and they know that their priorities are my priorities. That is why I brought forward this resolution today, calling on the Liberal government to listen to my constituents and negotiate with the city of Ottawa, so that we can get the Strandherd-Armstrong bridge built on time and on budget.

We need that bridge in Nepean-Carleton. Just yesterday, the city of Ottawa staff agreed, when they approved that bus rapid transit should run across that bridge.

I've raised this issue—the need for the bridge—in the Legislature many times. In fact, since December, I've introduced thousands of signatures on petitions, calling for this bridge to be built. I've also written several letters to the Premier and the Minister of Transportation on this important infrastructure investment—unfortunately, to no avail.

I'm disappointed that the Liberals have been ignoring my residents, my city and our local politicians because of their rigid position on transit. It is essential for members here to realize that a suburban rural riding like Nepean-Carleton needs both transportation and transit options. Our eggs can't be placed in only one basket; we need roads, bridges and transit to best serve the people in Nepean-Carleton.

Beyond that, the Strandherd-Armstrong bridge itself will be a most important link between the Rideau River communities of Riverside South and South Nepean, two

communities that are joined within a city ward, but that are disconnected by the mighty and historic Rideau River.

It will also be an important link for those living in the village of Manotick and those who reside near the Hunt Club bridge. Right now, the capacity of both Bridge Street in Manotick and the Hunt Club bridge is unsustainable, and the much-needed Strandherd-Armstrong bridge would alleviate traffic congestion during rush hours in these two communities. This, by the way, would really help out the member for Ottawa South, our Premier, whose riding would directly benefit from the decongestion on the Hunt Club bridge, which straddles the line between his riding and mine.

Not only that, but the proposed bridge will be an environmentally friendly infrastructure addition to my community. This, of course, is what makes a transportation initiative that much more appealing. It will get people out of their cars quicker. Instead of a 25-minute commute across the Hunt Club bridge or the Bridge Street bridge in Manotick, we will see my residents in their cars for five minutes, if at all. That's getting the majority of people who need the bridge out of their cars for an average of 20 minutes a trip. What's more environmentally friendly than that, I ask? I'll tell you.

The bridge will make it that much more appealing to put either light rail or bus rapid transit on its surface. That means that not only will we have people driving their own cars far less, but it also means we're going to get more people out of their cars. As I wrote to the Premier on November 25, 2007, "We both know that any rapid transit plan that deals with the southwest end of the city "must at some point include a crossing of the Rideau River from Riverside South to South Nepean for safety reasons, environmental concerns and to ease traffic congestion." I further said to him, "I know that you understand that without the Strandherd-Armstrong bridge, any rapid transit plan that involves the southwest end of the city is irrelevant."

The case for the bridge has been made in my community since the early 1990s. In 1993, a Rideau River bridge feasibility environmental assessment study was undertaken by the former region. At the time, it pointed out that "As development commences in the new growth areas, there will be a higher rate of east-west travel, which can only be satisfied by the construction of a new east-west arterial, including a new crossing of the Rideau River."

When you think of the growth of this community—what we know as ward 22, or South Nepean and



Riverside South—you will note that according to a city of Ottawa report, census data from 1991 to 2006 shows that South Nepean has grown from 22,000 residents to over 57,000, and Riverside South has grown from 710 residents to 7,600. You will agree with the same city of Ottawa study, which says, “Implementation of the Strandherd-Armstrong bridge presents opportunities for new travel patterns.... It would reduce current and future traffic demand on the existing Rideau River crossings ... and free up capacity to address future demand.”

As you can see, the case for the bridge has been made. But now it needs to be funded. I am concerned about politics being played to the point that this bridge will not be built. Without even batting an eyelash, the Premier has refused to fund this bridge. His spokesperson, Jane Almeida, told the Ottawa Citizen that the Premier did not see the bridge as a public transit option. This is despite the fact that the city plans to unite two urban communities with this bridge and use the link for some form of rapid transit. She then says in the same paper, “We will not be funding this bridge.”

Of course, that is quite brazen, considering that the Premier once endorsed the bridge and his community would benefit enormously from the bridge, since it would take traffic off the congested Hunt Club bridge. But Citizen columnist Ken Gray offers his reasoning for Mr. McGuinty’s objection to the bridge: “A Conservative who has been a burr under the Liberal saddle would add to Mr. McGuinty’s strong objection to the project.” That’s just plain wrong. More than that, in 2005, the Premier, along with the MPP for Ottawa–Orléans and the Minister of Community and Social Services, was only too happy to support the bridge when it was part of the now-defunct light rail plan.

As I will outline, the Strandherd-Armstrong bridge is good for transit, good for the environment and just plain good for our community. As my local community paper, the Manotick Messenger, says, “Bridge Should Connect Communities Not Divide Political Camps.”

So here we are. The city has identified this as an infrastructure priority, not just in the initial feasibility study in 1993, but as recently as last year, and the federal government has ponied up their \$35 million.

A comical quote in the Ottawa Citizen says this about the federal announcement: “Steve Desroches and I said if the federal government gives us the money we’ll kiss Stephen Harper right on the lips”—quoting maverick city councillor Jan Harder. Funnier still, though, is that when MP Pierre Poilievre actually delivered the funds from existing transit money, Liberals started to backtrack on whether or not they would support the project. It’s unbelievable: They put politics before people. Liberals are good at making promises and then breaking them. The two of them, Councillor Harder and Mr. McGuinty, have given flip-flopping a good name. But I digress.

You will see why we need the bridge. On July 13, 2007, a city report recommended that a detailed design and preliminary study be undertaken. On June 20, 2007, Transport 2000’s David Jeanes said the Strandherd

bridge is important to developing the south end community. On August 29, 2007, the city supported the Strandherd-Armstrong as a priority in its top 20 list. On October 23, 2007, the city voted to request federal and provincial funding for the bridge. The next day, October 24, Councillor Harder said, “The Strandherd-Armstrong bridge is an especially important project for the residents of the south end,” while Councillor Desroches said, “The bridge will be an integral piece of the overall transit and transportation puzzle.” On November 2, the city manager and the mayor of Ottawa wrote to the Minister of Transportation: “The Strandherd-Armstrong bridge is one of the city of Ottawa’s most important transportation and transit network projects.”

Just yesterday, April 16, 2008, the city of Ottawa identified it in its new \$4-billion transportation and transit plan. Ottawa will decide in May whether or not they will proceed with this plan. But that shouldn’t stop us from affirming in this Legislature today whether or not we support this bridge, regardless of the outcome in May.

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Again, the city has requested \$35 million for the bridge from the provincial government. Local councillors have put together an argument for the bridge, and they say they’ve never received a response from the Minister of Transportation. Of course, despite this, I will acknowledge that the province did invest \$35 million into the city of Ottawa in the last month and a half; \$20 million of that went to another infrastructure project and \$14.9 million of it went instead to snow clearing rather than infrastructure projects. So the city does bear a little bit of the blame here. But I’m going to tell you, we still need to do it, because if you’re doing the math, the city councillors for Barrhaven and South Nepean have passed up the opportunity to fund the bridge with existing provincial money.

In any event, there is another opportunity. Last night at a city committee, they voted against accepting \$40 million in committed provincial funding for Highway 174. They said it was not a priority. The city said the Strandherd bridge is a priority. I would urge councillors Harder and Desroches, as well as the Liberals in this place, to strongly consider transferring the funds from the highway to the bridge. The bridge is more environmentally sustainable than a highway, and it is an identified city priority. Now it’s up to us to make sure that the bridge is built. Under a Progressive Conservative administration, it already would have been, because we would have committed all revenues from the gas tax to municipalities for roads, bridges and transit.

This is the crux of a philosophical divide between my party and theirs. We believe in funding infrastructure and transit; the Liberals only believe in funding transportation. My colleagues from Wellington–Halton Hills and Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke agree. They both have motions before this House which would help municipalities with their infrastructure deficits. Mr. Arnott is appealing to the Legislature to upload all municipal bridges, and Mr. Yakabuski is reintroducing his idea of



putting gas tax revenues toward what they were intended for: roads, bridges and transit.

Today the Liberals can right the wrong. They can negotiate with the city of Ottawa for the \$35 million the city has requested for the bridge in their November 2 letter, or they can ignore the transportation needs of the fastest-growing community in Ottawa.

I will be watching the debate unfold today, and my constituents will be watching this debate unfold today too. We are all asking that politics be put aside so that we can move forward and build this bridge. I encourage all of my colleagues to support this resolution.

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier):** Further debate?

**Ms. Cheri DiNovo:** First of all, I have to say how much this House and certainly this particular member admires the passion and the integrity of the member from Nepean–Carleton and, of course, the zeal with which she defends the interests of her own riding and constituents, which is always a good thing to see in this House.

Having said that, I have to say that the New Democratic Party of Ontario supports both infrastructure funding and transportation funding, both of which the McGuinty government underfunds. We've heard our member from Timmins–James Bay speak about the lack of infrastructure funding for bridges in his communities. We've heard this as a regular theme in this House.

This week, of course, it's centred on the infrastructure funding for recreation and sports facilities across the province; the pools in Toronto being one example of that, where millions and millions of dollars are about to be lost—a former infrastructure investment—because we don't see the money to keep these infrastructure investments up.

So it's a general and a huge problem, not just in Nepean–Carleton, but right across the province. In fact, we're looking at a \$65-billion deficit in infrastructure spending, and it's piling up year to year to year.

Again, the McGuinty government, with its head in the sand, is not facing this huge and growing problem. It's not doing anything about it, and that's a serious problem.

I know, from a Toronto perspective, we're looking at a problem with infrastructure expenses and, of course, operating expenses in the city of Toronto, to the tune of over \$700 million a year that this province shortchanges the city of Toronto. That's year to year to year, and it piles up and piles up and piles up, and the government doesn't address it, doesn't do anything about it. This is a question of political will.

Of course, we have a political spin, as well, coming from across the aisle on this very subject. We saw an example of that with Bill 35—what we call the slush fund bill over here—which was supposed to help fund infrastructure, which was supposed to help fund municipalities. In fact, the two words “infrastructure” and “municipalities” don't appear anywhere in that bill, and even if they had, all that that bill would have accomplished was the crumbs left over after the meal is finished. Because it looks like there will be no crumbs left over, ac-

cording to the budget that was delivered, with a proposed surplus of \$600 million. Again, this is a problem that compounds year to year.

You heard the member from Nepean–Carleton who talked about the impacts on her community. Personally and politically, the New Democratic Party would rather see money go into transportation in Ottawa, which by all accounts has a pretty poor public transportation system.

Surprisingly enough, when we hear the grand announcements of Move Ontario, huge amounts of money promised—of course always sometime in the future, never today—that money is for the GTA. None of that money was directed to the Premier's own city. One has to wonder why his own riding doesn't experience the zeal and the passion and the commitment that the member from Nepean–Carleton brings to hers. If it did, perhaps some of that money for public transportation might have been directed there. So I would wonder at his own constituents and them watching this debate. Perhaps they would like to contact their member of provincial Parliament, the Premier himself, and demand some action on behalf of his constituents around the issue of public transportation and infrastructure development. Again, those are two words that never appeared in Bill 35 and actually, quite frankly, don't fully appear, except in spin, on the government's agenda.

I'm going to share my time with our member from Beaches–East York, so I will leave him time. As a former mayor of East York, I'm sure he has a great deal to say about investment in municipalities and infrastructure, something we don't see from across the aisle.

Again, just to reiterate, it's good news when a member stands up for her community. It's bad news when she has to stand up and take private members' public business time to ask for something as simple as the fixing up of a bridge, the matching of federal funds with provincial funds. It's sad news when the Premier of a province can't fund public transportation in his very own riding. It's sad news when infrastructure and municipalities don't appear in the bill that purports to help both. It's sad news to have to witness private members' public business again being used for a simple request for a simple municipality funding issue, and not for the broader issues with which I think this Legislature should be concerned.

**Mr. Phil McNeely:** I'm pleased to rise in the House today to speak to this private member's motion. The Strandherd–Armstrong bridge, of course, is an important crossing in the city. It's a priority amongst many priorities. I was a member of Parliament representing River-side South, which is the east landing of that bridge.

I worked with the Premier and with other members of the Legislature from Ottawa, in order to have the Strandherd–Armstrong bridge in that original transit project, which was so important to our city. We know the history of that transit project; it was approved. The contract, I believe, was signed. And it was a minister—I think the minister from the riding where this member from Nepean–Carleton lives now—a Mr. John Baird, the minister of increasing greenhouse gases. I think we know



him. It was meddling by this federal politician in a very important project to the city of Ottawa, a project that our Premier supported, where there was \$200 million from this province allocated towards public transit—it's still there—that meets the business case for ridership etc. But that project was signed, and now we're facing lawsuits over that project—and no Strandherd bridge. This member can go and talk to her federal cousins to find out why.

When we're looking at that project, we have to look at other projects in the city of Ottawa. Certainly a much bigger project which has been around much longer is an inter-provincial bridge to relieve the trucks and high traffic in the riding of Ottawa-Vanier, one that was pushed by Minister Meilleur for many years when I sat with her on council. That's a project that has much more importance to the province, and we're participating in that environmental assessment study. That's moving ahead well.

Ottawa-Orléans hasn't been well looked after in transportation. We have a real project that sits on Highway 417, a part where the province would naturally have a share in the cost. That's the Hunt Club extension, the interchange with 417. There's a dangerous problem on 417, so we're looking at priorities for provincial money. We certainly can put the municipal project down the line. When there are other programs like the MIII program, they took \$20 million and used it on the archives in Nepean. The archives are good for the whole city of Ottawa, but again, the Hunt Club interchange would have been a great project for that money: 60,000 vehicles through the split on a daily basis, much higher traffic.

1020

What we have to look at in Nepean and the Strandherd-Armstrong bridge is this: They've allowed a lot of growth on both sides of that river without providing for transportation. Where were the planners in the city of Ottawa when this was being done? Are there development charges that will pay for that bridge? It's not a provincial responsibility.

I was reading what an alternative for this member might be. In the *Globe and Mail* today, it says: "A Flavour of Pork. Finance Minister Jim Flaherty has an unfortunate habit of taking disproportionate care of his riding and his political pals. Pork-barrelling provisions are sprinkled through his budgets."

I suggest to the member that she write a "Dear John" letter. Maybe John can talk to Mr. Flaherty, and maybe they can come up with all of the funding. The federal funding they've put there—maybe they can come up with another third and that project could proceed.

I think that with the meddling that was carried on with that contract and with the significant losses for all the taxpayers of the city of Ottawa, it's time that that debt be paid by the so-called Minister of the Environment. I think that's where the dollars would come from, and if there's \$40 million of provincial money that the city wants to transfer, I think that's not their job to transfer that. I think they can look at the east end of the city of Ottawa and say some dollars should be left there. That \$40 million

there—just to transfer it to the Strandherd bridge? That's the normal way that Nepean carries on business in the city of Ottawa. We just lost a thousand RCMP jobs in the east of the city; again, a John Baird decision that's going to cause transportation problems throughout the city of Ottawa. The Strandherd bridge is important, but it has to be placed with other priorities in the city of Ottawa. Certainly we have to consider the east of the city as being very important as well.

I would just read that the Premier, the Minister of Transportation and the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing have consistently stated that this province has committed \$200 million for rapid transit to the city of Ottawa. This money is for rapid transit and not projects including the Strandherd-Armstrong bridge. That's pretty clear. That's what the dollars are for.

I feel that's important because in Ottawa-Orléans, we have ridership on public transit at 35% now. I would like us to take that up to 50%. We're talking about this part of Nepean that's been less developed. I think they have about 9% or 10% ridership or maybe slightly higher.

So I agree with the Premier, I agree with the Minister of Transportation, and I agree with the Ministry of Housing. This money must go for a project that will get more people out of their cars and get them onto public transit. That's not what bridges are for. Bridges are good projects, and you need bridges as well, but this is not a place to be putting part of our \$200 million which we have given to the city of Ottawa.

It's for those reasons: This is one project among many. It was already planned for, it was going to happen, and somebody sabotaged the agreement for the light rail in Ottawa. So I don't think that this government, who supported that project, should be in any way supporting a transfer of dollars that can be used for other, more important, projects. I think this is a federal problem. I would suggest that the member for Nepean-Carleton call up John Baird and Jim Flaherty, and see if they've got any more choo-choo trains that they could use in Nepean.

**Mr. Ted Arnott:** I'm very pleased this morning to have this opportunity to speak briefly in support of my colleague's resolution on the Strandherd-Armstrong bridge in her community. I want to congratulate the member for Nepean-Carleton for bringing this issue forward in the House this morning. Private members' time, I believe, Mr. Speaker—and I know you would agree—is an important opportunity for MPPs to bring forward issues that otherwise perhaps wouldn't be on the agenda of the government. That's why it's so important, and that's why we want to preserve it as an essential and important part of the Ontario Legislature's week.

The member for Nepean-Carleton has eloquently and passionately explained the reasons that she needed to bring forward this resolution this morning. She talked about the city of Ottawa's support. She reminded us of the many times that she has raised this issue in the Legislature in petitions and the times she has written the government in support of this bridge, to emphasize the need for it.



She talked about how important it is to have a balance of transportation facilities in her riding, including roads and transit—not one to the exclusion of the other—and she talked about the environmentally responsible aspects of this proposal and why it's important. I certainly agree with her and express support for her resolution, and I hope that the government members will support it as well.

The member for Nepean–Carleton talked about the resolution that I put forward in the Legislature, calling upon the government of Ontario, over a 12-year period, to assume responsibility for all the municipal bridges in Ontario, ensuring that these all-important links between communities are properly maintained. This is an idea that was included in our party's 2003 election platform. We knew it couldn't be done overnight, but we talked about doing it over a 12-year period. There are approximately 12,000 municipal bridges in the province of Ontario, and it could be done.

In our community of Centre Wellington where I reside, we have over 100 municipal bridges, because the Grand River and its tributaries go through our community and a number of the communities around Centre Wellington, in Wellington–Halton Hills, and some of the adjacent ridings have the same challenge to maintain these all-important structures and ensure that they are safe. They can't do it alone. They need substantial provincial government financial support to make sure that this happens. That was the point I was trying to make when I brought forward that resolution right before Christmas, and I would continue to draw attention to the need for the provincial government to assist municipalities with the bridges and their other basic and important infrastructure needs.

As I said earlier, I think that private members' bills are important, and that's why I was extremely disappointed to read the Hansard of the standing committee on finance and economic affairs. When they met on April 10—I'm pleased the Chair is in this House, and I hope he's listening—to discuss a subcommittee report on a private member's bill that was brought forward by the member from Burlington, Bill 42, that was passed by the House, referred to a standing committee of the House, a subcommittee took place to determine how the bill would be considered, and there was a decision by the subcommittee to put forward a motion to the full committee authorizing the standing committee on finance and economic affairs to meet today, this morning and this afternoon, to allow for some public discussion of an important private member's bill. The government members who were present at that committee that day voted it down so as to ensure that there couldn't be a reasonable discussion of this private member's bill. That, to me, says something about the government's lack of respect for the private members' bills that are passed by this House. There is no reason why that bill couldn't have been discussed today at the finance committee.

The government members had a number of excuses, talking about pending government legislation and busi-

ness that might have been referred to that committee, but as we know, the committee is not sitting today. The committee could have sat today and discussed that private member's bill, and yet it would appear that the government shot the process down.

I'm most disappointed in the members who voted against the motion of their own subcommittee. Obviously they were whipped to do so, but if they continue to allow the powers that be in the Premier's office to dictate private members' business, we are in serious trouble here and there are going to be serious consequences, I'm sure, for the House going forward.

And, of course, today we see in the orders and notices paper the new standing orders that the government is proposing. I would implore and urge all government members to consider the fact that these standing order changes were not included in your platform. You have no mandate to do this, and I would urge the Premier to allow a free vote on this motion and release his efforts to whip his members to vote for it. This is important for all members of this House, not just the government.

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier):** Member for Wellington–Halton Hills, I think we're dangerously close to debating a motion that is on the order paper. I'd like to get back to the motion that we're debating this morning.

**Mr. Ted Arnott:** I appreciate your intervention, Mr. Speaker, and of course, included in this motion is what we would be doing on Thursday, which is moving private members' business from Thursday morning as we have now, as we've had for all the 18 years I've been here and many years before that, moving it to the very last item of business in the week, which I suspect means that there will be very few members hanging around. What it does is trivialize the private members' process, and it's most unacceptable to me. It's offensive to me as an MPP who, in the past, has brought forward numerous private members' bills and resolutions, because I believe in the process and I believe that it's important that we allow for a meaningful discussion of these items. It is unacceptable that the government is bringing forward this motion to relegate private members' business to the very last Thursday of the week, where it will be neglected and overlooked.

1030

I would encourage all members of this House, especially the government members, to think about these issues as they relate to parliamentary democracy and give those ideas consideration as we move forward with debate on this government motion.

I want to congratulate again the member for Nepean–Carleton for bringing forward this resolution today and urge all members to support it.

**Mr. Michael Prue:** I rise to speak to this bill on the construction of the Strandherd–Armstrong bridge in Ottawa. I had the privilege, as a much younger man, to live in Ottawa for about a year when I went to Carleton University. I lived in several parts—

**Interjection:** A fantastic university.



**Mr. Michael Prue:** I'm hearing from one of my colleagues that he thinks it's a fantastic university as well.

I had an opportunity during that year to live in several locations, both in and around Ottawa, first of all downtown for the first few months, then out into Nepean for the next while, and then finally across the river in what is greater Ottawa, which was then the little hamlet of Aylmer and which is now part of the much larger Quebec city. So I think I understand, in part, what is going on here and what is happening in Ottawa, because I do get to go back to that city at least once or twice a year to visit friends and to do government business or whatever. It is a bustling metropolis and it is really starting to pick up.

It is, unfortunately, in my view—and I'm sure that some people in the suburbs don't like this view, but I'm a downtown guy. I would like to see the downtown of Ottawa rejuvenated a little more. I have to say that the last time I was there, it was kind of disappointing. Some portions of Bank Street, some portions of Bronson Avenue that I saw, even Elgin, which once had such vibrancy, appear to be gone. And that is moving out into the suburbs of Ottawa, much the same as the phenomenon that happened in Toronto many years ago with the expansion of Toronto beyond its normal boundaries, out into the suburbs of Mississauga, Peel, Brampton, York region and Durham. The same thing is happening to Ottawa.

The question that has to be asked by all of us: Is this what we want for our cities? There's no doubt that there is a demand for people to live outside the city cores, and there's no doubt that there is a demand for larger homes that can be built outside of the city cores in ways that they cannot be built in an urban environment, in places like Toronto or Ottawa or Hamilton. That is the question here: Does the government, or any government, want to fund sprawl and expansion and suburbia, or do they want to compact the city cores and, in so doing, help to preserve the environment and help to make urban cores transit-friendly?

This is a question of infrastructure and I guess it's a question of what should be done, given the limited circumstances of the present government of Ontario and the even more limited circumstances of the present government of the city of Ottawa. It is a question of infrastructure that all municipalities have to face. My own is not immune here in Toronto, nor are any of the 480 municipalities in Ontario immune to this. All of them have infrastructure needs. In fact, it is estimated by the Federation of Canadian Municipalities that in Ontario alone, there is about a \$65-billion infrastructure deficit and that municipalities do not have the money to do what they need to do.

I listened intently to the member as she presented her bill, and I listened intently to the member from Ottawa-Orléans as he debated the merits of the bill vis-à-vis other things that, in his belief, the city of Ottawa needs more of. We know that the infrastructures are in bad condition, not only in Ottawa but even in Essex. I believe the member from Essex is here today.

We need to find a solution to this, and I am not convinced that the solution lies within the four walls of this

bill. I admire the member for bringing it forward because she's fighting for her constituents and for what her constituents want. There is no doubt about that. But is it found within the four walls of this bill? If this bridge is built, it is built at the expense of what other infrastructure needs in Ottawa or elsewhere? If the money is to come, it is to come at the expense of what place? How much of a priority is this vis-à-vis the priorities of rebuilding the bridges in Essex, both of which have been declared unsafe? My colleague in Timmins raised the issue of a bridge that's down to one lane connecting major highways in the Timmins area. How much is this a priority? Of that, I am simply not aware. I don't know. I don't have a handle on those books. Even if I am the finance critic, the finance minister certainly won't let me see them and certainly won't let me sit around the cabinet to discuss the priorities. I've listened to only one Liberal speak, but I would hazard a guess that we can expect that most of the members sitting opposite will not be in support of this bill.

What I'm going to talk a little bit more about is the need to help the municipalities to decide what they want to do within the monies and the jurisdiction that they have. The municipalities in this province are hamstrung and remain hamstrung because there is a \$3.2-billion download that has not been uploaded. I know the government in the last campaign said that sometime in the four years, they're going to upload a portion of it. I'm still waiting to see that happen, because it didn't happen in this budget.

#### *Interjections.*

**Mr. Michael Prue:** I'm hearing catcalls here saying that they've started. They can start with little tiny steps, which is all Liberals ever do. They can start with those little tiny steps and say, "We're making progress." But \$3.2 billion is a lot of money, and when that comes off the backs of the municipalities, surely the municipalities will be in a much better place to be able to deliver the goods and services that they need to deliver, and not having to fund the government here in Ontario. I'm looking forward to that happening. I'm looking forward to the government putting down a realistic plan how the money is going to be spent across Ontario on infrastructure such as this.

It was laughable, absolutely laughable, when Bill 35 came before this House. It does not deal with infrastructure and it does not deal with municipalities. We saw that a mayor, a councillor and the head of AMO were brought forward—the Association of Municipalities of Ontario; I shouldn't be speaking in jargon—to say what a wonderful bill it was. But I haven't heard a word from them since they've actually seen the bill, which, if it does not preclude them, certainly allows the government to choose any other group other than them should there be any slush fund monies available at the end of the year.

That is not the way we need to deal with municipalities. They need firm, on-time funding each and every year to set their own priorities. That has not been done. That is what I'm hoping that this government will do so



that a member like the member for Nepean–Carleton won't have to stand here and make her individual pitch for something that is needed in her riding. It needs to be on a grid. We need to see where it fits vis-à-vis all the other requirements of the province of Ontario, and then we need to make realistic assessment and realistic apportioning of monies to which is the highest priority and in which year and which time frame.

I feel very sadly for what is happening in the city of Ottawa, which I think has precipitated all of this. First of all, the whole plan for light rail has been cancelled in Ottawa. The whole city and the city council has been set into disarray now that the transit system in downtown Ottawa is no longer there, or may no longer be there. The city council is also in disarray over the legal difficulties and challenges that the mayor is encountering and the fighting that has subsequently taken place within that council. And there is the added difficulty of the suburbanization of what used to be a fairly compact little city that is causing this tension. So you have the three things: the light rail that's been cancelled, a council that is partially dysfunctional due to court cases, and the increasing suburbanization of Ottawa, all coming into play and coming to this motion that we have here today.

1040

I do not support the ad hoc way that the members opposite and the government deal out infrastructure money and, because I do not support that, I would find it difficult to support ad hoc for one municipality. But I do commend the member for standing up for her residents. She is fighting for what her residents want and for what she believes. For that, I give her credit.

**Mr. Yasir Naqvi:** Thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak on this motion. At the outset, I will state that I will be voting against this motion. I will be voting against this motion based on facts, not based on political rhetoric, which has been talked about by the honourable member from Nepean–Carleton, and not based on politics, which is played through the city of Ottawa when it comes down to issues relating to public transit.

The facts are simple. This particular bridge is not a priority for the city of Ottawa. This particular bridge does not help with creating an effective public transit system in the city of Ottawa, which is very much needed at this particular time.

This government believes in working in partnership with municipalities, unlike previous Conservative governments, where decisions were being rammed down the throats of municipalities. What this government believes in is working with the municipalities, and the way one works with municipalities is by discussing projects with them, by ensuring that the dollars for municipal infrastructure resources are there, so the municipalities can make decisions as to how they are going to invest those funds.

Let's look at the facts in Ottawa alone. Most recently, in the spring 2008 budget, almost \$15 million were given to the city of Ottawa for roads and bridges in the city. Did the city choose to use that money for the Strandherd–Armstrong bridge? No.

Let's take the MIII investment. The city of Ottawa and all of the municipalities in this province had the opportunity to apply for grants for one particular infrastructure project. Did the city of Ottawa apply for project funding for the Strandherd–Armstrong bridge? No. In fact, they applied for a project to build Archives Ottawa and they received \$20 million for it.

I'll go on. In 2006, under the Move Ontario project the city of Ottawa received \$32.9 million for various municipal infrastructure projects. Did the city decide to use that money for this particular bridge? No.

It was the same thing with Millennium Partnerships: \$45 million. There are nine roads and bridges projects under that particular initiative that are taking place in the city of Ottawa. Once again, the Strandherd–Armstrong bridge is not on that particular list.

Lastly, I will mention the OIPC, the Ontario Infrastructure Projects Corp., which provides various municipalities with affordable loans for municipal infrastructure. To this day, the city of Ottawa has not applied for those loans through OIPC. In fact, they have actually received \$9.2 million and \$14.2 million respectively for two other infrastructure projects in the city. Once again the reality is that this particular project is not a priority for the city.

The relationship between the city and this provincial government continues to strengthen and continues to go. Let me just quote our mayor, a good friend of the honourable member from Nepean–Carleton and mine, Mayor Larry O'Brien, who just recently said, "The province of Ontario has never in its history been as good to eastern Ontario and Ottawa as it has been over the last two years while I have been mayor." This is the mayor of the city of Ottawa.

Let me talk about public transit. I represent a downtown community, the riding of Ottawa Centre, which is the hub of Ottawa's economy. This is where most of the jobs in that city are located. We welcome everyone from across the city to come and work in Ottawa, but what we don't want is people driving to the downtown core. What we want is fewer cars on the roads and more effective public transit so that we can maintain in Ottawa Centre the sustainability of our community, the livable, the walkable, the bikeable aspects of our community.

That's why I am very proud that more and more money from this government is being spent on transit in Ottawa: \$440 million has been committed for public transit. That includes \$200 million for rapid transit—the rapid transit project which included this particular bridge, if the friends of the honourable member for Nepean–Carleton had not derailed this project. Most recently, \$27 million was given to OC Transpo to enhance efficient public transit in Ottawa; and \$36 million in gas tax money this year alone, which now totals about \$118 million to enhance public transit.

These are the kinds of investments we need to make in Ottawa. We don't need more cars. We don't need more cars coming to downtown communities, communities like mine in Centretown, in Westboro and in the Glebe.



What we want is members from communities in Nepean–Carleton and other parts of the city coming to the downtown core, but taking the bus, taking light rail, coming into the community in an environmental fashion. More cars on the roads is not the solution for a better environment. Definitely, that's not a solution for my own community of Ottawa Centre. Again and again and again, as I'm out there knocking on doors and meeting with members of the community, I have been told by those who live in Ottawa Centre that they want a light rail project, that they are angry at the former Conservative member from this chamber, John Baird, the current federal Minister of the Environment, who derailed, axed this particular project. The honourable member from Nepean–Carleton did not say anything. She was quiet. Where was she then, at that point—

*Interjection.*

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier):** Member for Nepean–Carleton, I think the House listened to your speech, and we would like others to pay that same attention.

**Mr. Yasir Naqvi:** My community is consistently concerned about the fact that there is a lack of effective public transit. They were very excited about the fact that in 2006 we would have seen the beginning of a light rail project. As we know, a contract was awarded in that instance, and we would have been making sure that light rail was coming to the downtown community. We would have been bringing people from the southern part of the city of Ottawa, not in their cars but in an environmentally friendly light rail to the downtown community, helping the issues dealing with transit and helping issues dealing with the environment right here.

Sadly, when I am out there talking to people, that issue keeps coming up: “Whatever happened?” So I ask the honourable member from Nepean–Carleton that she should call her member of Parliament, John Baird, and remind him as to why he axed it. That particular bridge would have had public transit on it, if that project had not been axed by the federal Conservative member in the city of Ottawa.

**Mr. John Yakabuski:** I'm pleased to join the debate this morning and I will be speaking in favour of my colleague's private member's resolution.

I want to share the thoughts of the honourable member from Parkdale–High Park about how much we admire and respect the passion and the zeal with which our member from Nepean–Carleton represents her constituency, and how she is not afraid to stand up against the tide.

On that point, I must say, I chatted a couple of times with the new member from Ottawa Centre and I find him to be a very pleasant fellow and a very nice man. But it appears that he should have missed that first Liberal caucus meeting, because that's where they had him drink the Kool-Aid. Now he is just messaging exactly—I thought maybe we'd see a new and kind of refreshing voice, but no, it's just bang, same old mantra: Blame the federal government for everything that doesn't work out; blame

John Baird. In fact, it was the city of Ottawa who voted against the light rail, not John Baird.

1050

Anyhow, let's get back to this project. I would be the last one in the world, as you know, Mr. Speaker, to accuse the government of using partisan politics with regard to making a decision on this particular project, but the Strandherd–Armstrong bridge—let's just look at the facts. The Premier previously endorsed this project. It would have significant environmental benefits in that it would shorten the commute, thereby reducing the amount of greenhouse gases emitted in our atmosphere, because we're all striving to get cars to be on the road less and driving less distances, if possible. The city is ready to go. The member from Ottawa Centre says that it's not a priority. Well, I have a letter here from the city of Ottawa indicating very clearly that it is a priority. And the feds are prepared to fund one third of the project.

The city's in favour, ready to go; the feds are pretty prepared to fess up the money; the Premier previously endorsed this project, as did the member from Ottawa–Orléans. So there are a lot of pieces fitting together here in the puzzle. Again I say, I'm not the one who is going to accuse the government of being partisan, but we can all put those pieces of that puzzle together and we may be able to draw that conclusion. Perhaps the voters in Ottawa will draw that conclusion as well.

My question would be, if that's the case, why? Because Lisa MacLeod, the member from Nepean–Carleton, is a particularly aggressive member who will not back down for any reason when she's representing her constituents? Is it because she's a burr under the saddle of the ministers who reside in the city of Ottawa? Is it because she gets publicity when they're not doing something? Is it because she draws the media's attention to the fact that this government is not keeping its word and is breaking its promises? Don't be afraid because it may be perceived by you as a victory for Lisa MacLeod; this is a victory for the people of Ottawa. This would be a victory for the environment. And we all know, after last night's fourth straight loss to the Pittsburgh Penguins, that they're looking for victories in Ottawa. Perhaps this bridge would be one way for this government and this Ottawa Premier to say, “Look, I know you all know that I'm really a Toronto Premier, but I'm actually going to try to do something positive for the city of Ottawa as well.”

I know that people are saying that the city of Ottawa took some of this infrastructure money and spent it on snow and slush removal, but I don't want to be too hard on the city of Ottawa. I want to ask this government, what kind of plan did you have in place that allowed those loopholes? That's like sending your child to the grocery store without a list and then not being happy when they come home with all of the things that you didn't want them to buy. You can't just hand out money without having some conditions, and that's what this government did with that particular project.



They're here. They're blaming everybody. They blame the feds. They blame the member. When is it going to be time for you people to stand up in the morning, look in the mirror and see what you can do to make it better for the people of Ottawa?

**Ms. Laurie Scott:** I am pleased to join in the debate. I'm afraid I missed the first part of it and it seems I should be disappointed because it's been very interesting in the Legislature this morning. But I'm pleased to stand and support the member from Nepean—Carleton.

The bill we're debating is providing assistance to finally build the Strandherd-Armstrong bridge.

There's been great discussion here this morning about the struggle that municipalities have in dealing with the provincial government. The case has been brought forward very passionately. We have a very strong advocate in the member from Nepean—Carleton for bringing the needs of municipalities in her riding forward. We're saying the city of Ottawa wants it; we're saying the federal government's ready to stand up. Where's the provincial government? That is the question. Thus, we have the—

*Interjection.*

**Ms. Laurie Scott:** Yes. This is what we're discussing here in the Legislature this morning.

Municipalities are faced with this lottery type of system. They spend thousands of dollars on studies, on applying, trying to comply. Maybe there are rules for applications for money that's available. Maybe there's just a quick form. How do they know? They need some long-term commitment from the provincial government here, and we're seeing that they're not getting it.

The municipalities have gotten some money in the last few weeks, at year-end. They quickly filled out the form, crossed their fingers and hoped for the best. Some won, some didn't win.

*Interjection.*

**Ms. Laurie Scott:** Well, I've got a few examples from my riding that I'll bring forward too.

This is what we are hearing, the challenges we face in our municipalities, and this example of the Strandherd-Armstrong bridge is classic. I know the member from Nepean—Carleton has a stack of reports as to why this bridge is important, and I'm sure if the new member from Ottawa Centre doesn't have them, he will be getting them shortly.

**Mr. Robert Bailey:** He'll soon find out.

**Ms. Laurie Scott:** He certainly will find out so that maybe he can get on the same page with the needs that are occurring in his area of the province.

I've had challenges with some bridges myself in the riding of Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock. I know that Algonquin Highlands has applied, in a very serious emergency bridge matter, to the local MIII program. They weren't accepted, and they weren't accepted in COMRIF for a few years previous too. But I've talked to the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal to say, "Okay, I think we need to look at this a little closer. There are some emergencies going on that need to be addressed."

I'm hoping that maybe we can see some long-range infrastructure planning for the municipalities. That report is still coming up, isn't it? When is it due? Has that report on the funding been delayed? It keeps getting delayed. But I'm hoping that when this report comes forward, the Liberals will actually act on it, because one-time funding, band-aid solutions, are not what our municipalities need. They need to have long-range plans from this government, which we fail to see. They're not really great on planning.

I have the County Road 24 bridge, and the Bobcaygeon bridge too that suddenly needs some serious—there has to be a complete rebuild. There's not even a repair that's possible. So I know that the municipality of the city of Kawartha Lakes will be coming to you.

These are important economic lifelines to our communities and they have to be addressed. I'm hoping that the municipalities use this year-end money that went out the door quickly for the roads and bridges they need in their municipalities.

*Interjection.*

**Ms. Laurie Scott:** I hear the member from Ottawa—Orléans made a second change of direction this week when he actually supported the speed limiters. He was converted, I guess, on the road to Damascus. He kind of referenced the other evening in the Legislature that he's had a change of plans.

I just want to state that roads and bridges are about connecting communities. They are not dividing political camps. That is what the member from Nepean—Carleton is saying in her remarks, and I hope this government takes heed of those.

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier):** The member for Nepean—Carleton, you have two minutes to respond.

**Ms. Lisa MacLeod:** As I started out in my speech, people send me here because they know I mean what I say and I say what I mean, and I'll never ever stop being like that, unlike the two members from Ottawa who spoke to this, who had to be whipped in what they had to say. That's a shame. They should be fighting for the people of our community. Instead, we've got a Move Ontario plan that forgets Ottawa, and they say nothing at the caucus table. We've got a McGuinty gap, where the residents of my city receive \$519.75 less per household than they do in the city of Toronto, but the member from Ottawa Centre remains silent at the caucus table in the Liberal Party. He's a flip-flopper and he speaks with a forked tongue. Because I will tell you something: While he pretends that I don't have the response, here is what I—

**Mr. Jeff Leal:** Mr. Speaker, on a point of order: I'm not sure that the term "speaking with a forked tongue" and the implications of that is parliamentary.

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier):** I caution members, as others in the chair have, to use moderate, debatable language in the House. We'll all be happier.

**Ms. Lisa MacLeod:** Withdrawn, Mr. Speaker, and an apology to the member. But he did bring some serious



myths to this chamber, which I think need to be pointed out.

He says that the city hasn't identified this as a project. I have a file full of reports from the city of Ottawa: June 13, 2007, a city report about the priority of this bridge; August 29, 2007, the city supported the Strandherd bridge as a priority in a list of top 20 investments; on October 23, the city of Ottawa voted to request federal and provincial funding for the bridge. And from November 2, I have the letter of all letters from the mayor and the general manager of the city of Ottawa:

"With council direction, we are hereby requesting that the provincial government fund a minimum of one third of the amount of funding in building the bridge and associated roadworks."

I can understand that since the two previous mayors of Ottawa, including the current one, did not support him in the last election, he might want to play with the facts a little bit, but the facts speak for themselves. On Friday, November 2, they wrote to the Minister of Transportation requesting support for this bridge.

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier):** Thank you.

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## RED TAPE AND REGULATORY REVIEW ACT, 2008

### LOI DE 2008 SUR LA RÉVISION DES FORMALITÉS ADMINISTRATIVES ET DES DISPOSITIONS RÉGLEMENTAIRES

Mr. Hillier moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 57, An Act to establish political oversight over legislation and regulations to reduce red tape and unjustified regulatory burdens / Projet de loi 57, Loi établissant un régime de surveillance politique des lois et règlements afin de réduire les formalités administratives et les fardeaux réglementaires injustifiés.

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier):** Mr. Hillier, pursuant to standing order 96, you have up to 10 minutes.

**Mr. Randy Hillier:** The short title for this bill is the Red Tape and Regulatory Review Act. I think, without question, all of us in this assembly can agree that regulations are more and more often, increasingly, being done outside of this assembly. The unaccountable bureaucracy is making regulations passed by cabinet and never coming back to this House for oversight and review. I think that's pretty clear.

But there is a consequence to it. We are the people who have been elected to make regulations and legislation. Not the bureaucracy, not the policy wonks—we. We are accountable to our residents and our constituents, but we don't see these regulations.

Over the last number of years, I've travelled extensively across this province, and we've seen what the cost is for these regulations, the unintended consequences of

them and how they harm and hurt our residents, harm and jeopardize our businesses and our economy. We must do something to prevent this.

We have seen that these regulations have often become counterproductive. They have been intended to achieve one thing, and they actually end up doing the opposite. We've also seen how these well-intended regulations are reducing and minimizing the role of people and their judgment; not recognizing the good judgement of people.

I guess I'd like to read one thing. We've seen all kinds of examples of these nanny state regulations that have been implemented. I'll read a passage from a fellow legislator back in the 1800s, Frédéric Bastiat. He talks about, "Thus, of course, the legislators must make plans for the people in order to save them from themselves."

This line of reasoning brings us to a challenging question. If people are as incapable, as immoral and as ignorant as the politicians indicate, then why is the right of the same people to vote defended with such passionate insistence? I think that's an important thing that we have to recognize. We have to take back control over regulations, over-intrusive regulations, and prevent them from diminishing our economy and harming our people.

It's not just me who believes this. The Canadian Federation of Independent Business, the largest business group in the country, also agrees. I'll just read a couple of quotes from the CFIB. Their members say: "The totality of provincial regulations far exceeds small business capacity to know, understand and comply." The regs they do know about are unreasonably expensive and onerous. Provincial government has no idea of the size of regulatory workload it places on small business, and there is no attempt by government to measure it. CFIB goes on to say that, currently, this burden on small and medium-sized enterprises is \$13 billion a year in this province—\$13 billion.

We know we're moving into an economic downturn. We have to start doing something about this. Furthermore, with the CFIB, 65% of all their members identify government regulation and paper burdens as their greatest concern. I could go on with many, many quotes from the CFIB. But it's not only the CFIB. As well, it's also Roger Martin and his task force on competitiveness. This is what Roger Martin has to say about our Ontario government's regulations and policies: "Ontario has one of the worst regimes for new business investment." He goes on to talk about "a balanced regulatory environment that meets the need for worker and consumer protection and for flexibility and responsiveness in resource allocation to the best opportunities for wealth creation." We know that the current approaches are not working. That's what Roger Martin has to say about our present regulatory regime.

The present Liberal government has also talked about the need for red tape and regulatory review. Mr. McGuinty, in 2005, said he wanted "to remove the burden of process from spending approvals," a sign that he's unhappy with bureaucrats who tie up government plans in red tape. That was June 30, 2005.



Here's a recent quote from the Premier: "Ontario's goal is to lead all Canadian jurisdictions in efforts to measure and reduce the regulatory burden." That's what the Ontario provincial Liberal government has recognized: that we must reduce regulations.

There are many, many examples: in my own riding, the Lafarge plant. For four years they've been trying to get approvals that would create more employment and improve our environment, and for four years they've been stuck up in process; red tape, counterproductive regulations. We have seen church suppers, butcher shops, sawmills and farmers' markets all feel the weight of unintended consequences of red tape.

We have an obligation. I believe all members of this House have an obligation not just to create nanny-state regulations but an obligation and a duty to fix those things that are wrong, those things that we know to be wrong. That is what we are elected for: to fix what is wrong and the wrongs that we have created.

We've seen all kinds of contractors who cannot hire apprentices.

This new bill—we even want to ban Tony the Tiger from advertising to children now.

**Mr. Tim Hudak:** Not Tony the Tiger.

**Mr. Randy Hillier:** Tony has to go.

Let's do the right thing. I believe that this bill, which creates a red tape and regulatory review committee—a standing committee in this House where every regulation that is drafted comes before the House for our review. We'll review it for a number of things. Is the public purpose identified so we can measure and hold it to account? Is the regulation counterproductive, or will it meet its intended objective? Who is best suited to be the regulator? Not always is government best suited to regulate; there are others out there who do quite a fine job regulating. Finally, we also have to look at: Does it infringe upon people's use and enjoyment of their property, and does it offer compensation if it does infringe?

Those are a few of the elements that this review committee can look at and make sure that what we do in this House can be held to account, our constituents know what we are bringing forth, and that we also understand if we are going to put another church supper or farmer's market under the hammer.

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I really ask everybody once again in this House: Let's look at this bill and do what is right for our residents, our constituents. Let's do what will help and improve our economy. Let us work together and make sure we have oversight of all regulations that come before the people that they must bear.

I want to thank you all for listening and taking time to consider this bill. I think it's a good bill, and I look forward to it being in committee where it can come under the scrutiny of the whole House to actually improve it where it can be improved.

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier):** Further debate?

**Mr. Khalil Ramal:** I'm pleased to join the debate on Bill 57, An Act to establish political oversight over legis-

lation and regulations to reduce red tape and unjustified regulatory burdens on the businesses of Ontario.

I was listening to the member from Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington when he was speaking about bureaucracy and he was speaking about civil servants. I want to disagree with him, because those people do an excellent job on behalf of all of us in the province of Ontario. As a member elected four years ago, I have moved from ministry to ministry. I don't claim at any time to know all the details of a ministry. I'm not specialized in any specifics in the area, so all of us from any party, any group, rely on them for expertise and advice. As you know, this place was founded to implement bills and regulations. We send those bills and regulations to be implemented by civil servants. That's why the origin of the laws and rules comes from this place. Civil servants are in charge of advising us and also trying to implement them in a fashion that respects and protects the people of Ontario.

I was listening to the member when he was speaking about the bill. He doesn't want any regulatory bodies. As you know, we are governed in Ontario by almost 37 regulatory bodies dealing with professions from medical to pharmacists to nurses etc., because they want to enhance capacity and protect the professions in a fashion that they can enhance the ability to serve the people of Ontario and also make sure that all the people being served by their professions are protected and safe. As you know, we have the medical professions, the nurses—they cannot hire anyone from the street without credentials, which are required in order to give them the ability of accreditation to practise and also deal with the people of Ontario.

You also talk about regulations being a burden on many small businesses. You mentioned butchers, farmers' markets. If you ask them to get rid of all the inspectors—the past Conservative government fired all the water inspectors; that's why we had the Walkerton tragedy. Also, if you're asking us to fire meat inspectors—I don't know if you remember Aylmer Meat Packers near London, but that disaster happened because it was not inspected regularly. There weren't enough people on the street to inspect those facilities to make sure the people of Ontario were eating safe, healthy meat.

I also want to respond to the member when he talked about our Premier. Yes, our Premier cares about cutting red tape. I'll give you an example. Mr. Speaker, you were here in this Legislature when we introduced many different bills to work with government ministries to break the silos by creating a one-stop-shopping website for visiting all the ministry sites. You can navigate the system easily and with no problem.

We also created a toll-free number for the people of Ontario to phone and ask. We also created a live answer. Instead of navigating the system of Yellow Pages and blue pages, now we have a person on the other end to answer your questions.

We also introduced in 2007 a bill, the Regulatory Modernization Act, which became effective January 17,



2008, and enabled regulatory ministries and other regulators to work together more effectively to protect the public interest.

We are on the road to harmonizing all the services, trying to break those silos to help the people of Ontario to navigate the system and be able to be served without any problem. But our obligation, as a government, as elected officials, is to protect the people by creating some kind of system they have to go through instead of being harmed, and holding people accountable. Can you imagine that anyone can open a butcher shop? Can you imagine that anyone can open a private practice to treat people? Can you imagine that anyone could do business without any regulations and accountability? Therefore, those are in there to protect the people to make sure everyone's safe.

Thank you again for letting me join the debate on this particular bill.

**Mr. John Yakabuski:** I want to say thank you to my colleague from Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington for bringing forth this bill for private members' public business. I want to congratulate him for his election to the Legislature and also commend him for the passion with which he follows his principles and represents his people.

He alluded at one point to businesses, and how businesses in this province feel strangled by the regulatory burden that is placed on them by government. That has been a growing burden over several decades, but it has reached a point—and when business is tough and when the economy is weakening, and we're in that situation right now, where everybody recognizes just how costly that is to business. It costs businesses in this province billions of dollars a year just to meet the regulatory burden placed on them by government, with no benefit to the people.

I'm going to give you a couple of examples. Back in the early 1990s, there was a regulation written in the Environmental Protection Act that was interpreted by some bureaucrats to say that sawdust was a hazardous material. This is the product that you put on your flower beds. You go to the garden centre, buy it in bags, put it on your flower beds—various reasons.

In fact, years ago, Mr. Speaker—and not to point anything out, but you might even be older than me and you would remember a time, certainly in rural Ontario, when not everybody had electric power and they used iceboxes. They had ice houses. In the wintertime, they went out and they sawed ice on the lakes, took it home on horse-drawn sleighs and stored it in ice houses. What did they store it in so that they would have ice all summer long to keep their food from spoiling prematurely? What did they store it in? That hazardous product, sawdust.

We got some overly zealous bureaucrats—they stay up at night wondering, "Okay, what can we go after next? Look, we're making six figures here. We've got to pick on something. What can we go after next?" So several years ago they decided that sawdust was going to be the target.

Two particular people in my riding, Earl Saar and Glen Gulick, were challenged by this. Unfortunately, Mr.

Saar had to go to court and ended up closing his sawmill because the legal battle was protracted and he could not afford it. Another member of my community, Glen Gulick, who runs a sawmill down in Palmer Rapids, went the distance in court. It cost him hundreds of thousands of dollars, and at the end of the day, they're not going around bothering people in the mills anymore because it was just ludicrous. Silliness; absolute silliness. But how much of our taxpayers' dollars were spent on that because somebody decided, "Hey, here's a regulation that was written in 1990. Let's have some fun with it. Let's go bother the hardworking people in the province of Ontario trying to make a living?"

That's what happens with too much red tape. I don't know exactly where the term "red tape" comes from, but I'm sure it has something to do with Liberals because they're so proud of that red colour. Every time they get into power—the master of red tape prior to this government was the Peterson government. And now this government wants to get back on the red-tape wagon.

The previous government actually established a commission to reduce red tape. That is a laudable goal, and that's something we should be looking forward to.

I congratulate the member. I'll be supporting that motion.

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**Mr. Michael Prue:** I rise to speak concerning Bill 57. I listened to what my friend from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke had to say. I just want to tell him that the red tape has been around in this country for a long time. In fact, in my first full-time job in the immigration department back in the early 1970s, we had red tape that was issued by the federal government of Canada. We used that red tape—it was a cloth-type tape—to wrap up the old files before they were sent to the archives. That is where it comes from. It was for old government files that were wrapped in red tape to signify that they were no longer active—just for the record.

**Mr. Michael A. Brown:** Did you nickname it?

**Mr. Michael Prue:** It was called red tape.

**Mr. John Yakabuski:** What was the government at the time? Was it Liberal?

**Mr. Michael Prue:** It was indeed.

Now, what is purported to happen as a result of this bill is that the House will set a separate committee. I'm not sure whether the members—no one has spoken to that yet. We already have five or six standing committees. We also have the opportunity, as a House, from time to time to set up a select committee and to send bills to any of the committees or to any select committee. What is being proposed here is to set up a new and separate committee apart from the existing structure in this House. That committee would look at the regulatory burden it would look at the freedom and ownership of property, it would look at unjustified burdens, and it would look at whether the administrative body to whom the bill was sent was the appropriate body.

I'm not sure that the vehicle being used by this bill is the appropriate one, because what this bill in effect says



is that the standing committees of this House are not doing their job. The standing committees have the obligation—each and every one of them, be they the finance committee, the legislative committee or the regulations and private bills committee—all of them have the responsibility of looking at the regulatory burden; the freedom of ownership of property, if that is an issue; the burden on the taxpayer or on business or anyone else; and they also have the responsibility of explaining to this House if the bill is in some way going to the wrong body for implementation.

I am not sure what is going to happen by simply setting up another committee. This is a committee whose sole job will be to oversee the existing committees. Because as you read through the bill, each committee will continue to do its job and then the bill will be sent to this new separate, distinct committee that will look at red tape. They will hold the bill and they will make whatever recommendations they wish and hold it for up to 60 days before regulations can be implemented.

This is an ideological perspective of many people on the right. It is an ideological perspective which I do not share. Quite frankly, in my 20 years in public life—and this is my 20th year, both in the municipality and in this Legislature—I have had the highest regard for the people who work for both municipal governments and provincial governments. As a former civil servant, I can tell you, from when I was one of the people who worked for the federal government, that there is a place in our system for bureaucracy. There is a place in our system—

*Interjection.*

**Mr. Michael Prue:** I'm being heckled.

There is a place in our system for the men and women who do the job that they are intended to do. It is our job as legislators to oversee that. It is our job to make the bills, it is the government's job to make the regulations, and it is our job collectively to oversee what is happening.

I have heard what the members had to say. I have heard what they had to say about overzealous people out there doing their jobs, who are looking at a regulation and trying to enforce something for which there is not much practical reason. I would agree. There was the whole sushi scandal, that the fish had to be frozen first before it could be eaten. If you are a sushi aficionado at all, you will know you don't do that.

**Mr. John Yakabuski:** It's not much good for the taste.

**Mr. Michael Prue:** No, it's not much good for the taste. But, with the greatest of respect, although that was determined by someone within the bureaucracy, it did not take very long for either the minister or this House to raise the issue and to stop it, and it has not taken very long in all of the jurisdictions to stop the overzealousness when and if this should occur.

I do have some real problems with ideological deregulation because I have seen places where I wish there was more regulation. I look at the Ontario Securities Commission and I wish there were more regulation. I

wish that people weren't at risk of losing their money. I look at what is happening in the United States and all around—the stuff about airlines; I look at the airlines. Do you remember that we deregulated all of the airlines? Can anybody honestly tell me that you think we get better service today, that you know the waiting times have been cut or that the people are any better with whom we deal, or that we're safer or—

**Mr. Tim Hudak:** I like Porter.

**Mr. Michael Prue:** Okay. We have a gentleman here who likes Porter. But apart from all of that, I don't think deregulations have helped the airlines and I don't think deregulations have helped the markets.

Look at what has happened in the markets in the United States and in Canada over the last couple of months. They've been on a see-saw because unfettered deregulation has occurred. You've seen things like Bear Stearns. You've seen the whole trap that even this government got caught in with asset-backed paper—

**Mr. John Yakabuski:** Commercial paper.

**Mr. Michael Prue:** —commercial paper, because it was deregulated, because nobody is out there watching it, because no government is there, no bureaucrat is there and no civil servant is there. Quite frankly, that causes me a great deal of difficulty. It causes me a great deal of difficulty, and I do acknowledge that a farmers' market may have been dealt with inappropriately. I do acknowledge that a church supper was looked at inappropriately, but those were relatively small things that were easily cured, and cured very quickly. The big things that need regulation are not there. I think that most people in our society understand the role of government. They understand that we in this Legislature are here to protect them many, many times from forces that are beyond their control—the overwhelming, huge forces—and that regulations sometimes help. I have some difficulty with the ideological position that regulation is not necessarily a good thing. I hold the opposite view: Regulation is a good thing, and if it's excessive, then it should be taken away.

**Mr. John Yakabuski:** That's what we're talking about.

**Mr. Michael Prue:** No, no, that's not what this bill does. If that's what you're saying, that isn't what I've heard. With the greatest of respect, we have had situations—and I heard howls about Walkerton, but that was in part due to deregulations. We've had real problems in this House and the government, the new government, the Liberal government, because of the partial and botched deregulation of the hydro system. We still have not recovered from that.

So, with the greatest of respect to the mover of this bill, I believe that the House has the necessary tools at its disposal at this time. With the five standing committees and with any select committee that might be established, I believe that we have the wherewithal to establish regulations that are meaningful and effective. I believe that the civil servants in this province do a very good and excellent job in enforcing the regulations that are put forward by this House and by the governments from time



to time. I do not share the concern of the mover that we should proceed in this fashion, and therefore I cannot support the bill.

**Mrs. Carol Mitchell:** I just wanted to lay it right on the table that I will not be supporting this either. One of the things I want to make perfectly clear is that when good public policy comes forward, it comes forward in a balanced manner and being respectful of the vision of where you want to go, but it's based on good public policy with the understanding to minimize the effects on those who would be affected, such as small business.

I can tell you I do come from a small business background and, as many of you know, I also come from a municipal background. I want to share a little story; as you know, I was also the warden of the county while the downloading happened. One of the things that happened the first year I was warden was the Walkerton tragedy. At that time, while the Red Tape Commission of the previous government was ongoing, we begged the previous government, from a public health policy point of view, not to take away the ability for the medical officers of health to communicate with the water providers. But did they listen? No, they did not listen. It was shortly afterwards that the Walkerton tragedy happened. What do you think happened in our rural communities after that? Now I have the honour and privilege of representing Walkerton, and I can tell you they have come a long way, have built a very strong foundation, and their future looks brighter.

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But how did we begin the Red Tape Commission? We began with words like "incompetent," "unaccountable," slamming the bureaucracy. I looked to this member's maiden speech. That language was used then; that language is used today. When we begin in that manner, we know the outcome. We've seen the outcome; we've lived through the outcome. What do you think happened in ridings like Huron-Bruce when meat inspectors were fired? We produce the largest amount of beef that is consumed in this province. What do you think would have happened if that had gone on, if there hadn't been an election? I had the privilege of running the Minister of Agriculture from there. What do you think my beef gentlemen and women wanted to talk about? They wanted to talk about that issue. Was there ever any thought about what that would do to all of our communities, as you fired water inspectors, as you fired meat inspectors? What did you think was going to happen to our rural communities?

Now, specifically, comments are made about church suppers and farmers' markets. Today in the riding of Huron-Bruce we have more farmers' markets, and by the work that has been done by this government on this side, our church suppers are strong and they're providing the financial assistance that is needed to make sure that we have a strong foundation to provide the people of Huron-Bruce somewhere to go within their churches. We understand.

But make no mistake: That regulatory framework came in when? When did it begin? They now say, "Oh, it

wasn't me," but we know it was. Then, when it all became such an issue, they just couldn't remember. Suddenly a fog—

**Interjection:** A shock.

**Mrs. Carol Mitchell:** —a shock came over them.

But one of the things I do want to talk about is this government's commitment. We have made a strong commitment to reduce the regulatory burden on Ontario businesses by 20% by the year 2011. We will do this in a balanced manner that is respectful of what is needed to ensure that all of us move forward in Ontario and that we move forward in a sustainable manner.

I do thank the honourable member from Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington for bringing it forward. It reinforces what that side of the House is all about, and I thank you for allowing me the opportunity to speak on that again.

**Mr. Tim Hudak:** Now that the fairy tale has been completed, it's time to move on with the facts when it comes to red tape in the province of Ontario. In fact, the Canadian Federation of Independent Business has said that a survey of the members indicates that red tape and regulation have increased during the past three years of Liberal government and estimates that the total burden is some \$13 billion annually weighing down on the business sector. We looked this up. The facts are actually the opposite of what the member from Huron-Bruce's fiction would tell you.

Since 2003, this government has created 437 new regulations and revoked only 81. So for every regulation they revoked, they added on 5.4 more regulations, increasing the burden on the backs of businesses and working families in Ontario. I congratulate the member for Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington for bringing forward this bill—a weighty bill, not like some of the flighty stuff we see from across the floor but something of real substance.

I know the member from Huron-Bruce is anxious to rush to the defence of the Koebel brothers in their attack on the previous government. That's a choice, I guess, she makes here in the assembly. My recollection is something quite the opposite.

As well, red tape impacts on the delivery of services; not only on business but on social services agencies. By way of example, we found out that the Best Start program offered at St. Martin elementary school in Smithville will close permanently in June. It's an innovative program that combines daycare with programs to help parents to better their parenting skills, prepare children to enter school and offer screening to determine if children are reaching behavioural and developmental milestones. If they need the extra help, then they are referred for speech and language services. So parents like the Bruculieri family and Phil Ieluzzi—there are many examples, and I back them up—from across West Lincoln and neighbouring communities like Binbrook are calling on this government to challenge the Minister of Children and Youth Services to get directly involved and restore that program in Smithville. It's part of the vast community of the township of West Lincoln.



My last point is that the Red Tape Commission in Ontario was actually a world leader. They came to Ontario to see what the Mike Harris PC government was doing to reduce the red tape burden on businesses. They helped ministries revoke over 2,100 unnecessary regulations. They were advocates and helped 200 individual businesses with their red tape problems. They had a website established in 2000 that attracted 1,000 visits a month. With 15 different red tape reduction bills, it was a regular part of business in this Legislature to remove that burden. You see the opposite, and the Dalton McGuinty Liberals in my view have accomplished one thing, and that's cutting red tape lengthwise, increasing that burden.

The member is right. I strongly support this legislation.

**Ms. Cheri DiNovo:** First and foremost, I'll say for the record that I'm also unable to support the member's bill, Bill 57. It's fascinating; I think this bill does pinpoint the ideological differences in this House. Across the aisle we have the Liberal Party under Dalton McGuinty that runs their principles based on polls. To our right, we have the Progressive Conservatives, who base this particular bill on libertarian principles. They have ideological principles but they are principles we in the New Democratic Party absolutely disagree with. I'm going to focus on why we absolutely disagree with the foundations of libertarianism which go into this bill.

I have to say that I share some of the sentiment of the member from Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington. I certainly commend him for what he's done since he's been elected, particularly around the Tibetan cause, when he showed such courage. And I appreciate the sentiment for small business. I'm the small business critic for the New Democratic Party. Karl's butcher shop is in my riding. That was the butcher shop that, in part, was forced to close because of regulations that were put in place in a most untransparent manner, I must say, by this government.

The most egregious result—I think of unaccountability, untransparency and unelectability—is the Ontario Municipal Board, which, trust me, as a housing critic, we're always up against. I introduced a motion to reform that body. We would like to see it abolished as far as Toronto issues are concerned. So I appreciate the sentiment.

Are regulations necessary? Really, what we're saying is, "Is government necessary? Is government oversight and regulation, put into place by government, necessary?" Certainly we in the New Democratic Party would say, "Absolutely, it's necessary." You can have both. You can have vibrant economies and regulation and government oversight. We see this in Scandinavian Sweden, where you have an incredibly vibrant capitalist economy and yet you still have 85% unionization, you still have regulations in place and you have a way better quality of life than we experience in Ontario.

In fact, if you go back to the days of the lack of regulation at the turn of the century, when we fought to bring in child labour laws, when we fought to bring in labour laws of any kind, those were the days of lack of

regulation as well. Those were the days when libertarianism carried the day. We've been there; we've tried that. It didn't work.

Tommy Douglas once talked about the cats and the mice. If the mice keep electing the cats, the mice never get a say. We believe that you need to elect those who represent you, not represent the interests of big business or private property alone.

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Interestingly enough, the other concern I have about Bill 57 is that Bill 57 actually adds to the red tape and the bureaucracy of this government. It's another level of oversight. We think the committees should do their jobs better and more transparently, but we certainly don't want to blame the civil servants who work hard and long hours doing what they can to actually put into place what this Legislature should be doing and of course has done, sometimes for the betterment of Ontarians, sometimes not for the betterment of Ontarians.

So there's an ideological, principled difference between we in the New Democratic Party, who are social democrats, and elements of those in the Progressive Conservative Party who subscribe to the libertarian point of view—you know, less and less and less government. I should say, they share this with the Green Party, who are also libertarians at their core. We don't subscribe to that. We subscribe to responsible government, to an elected representative who stands up for their constituency, who is supported, yes, by a bureaucracy of civil servants, whom we believe in strongly, whom we think are doing an excellent job.

All we ask, of course, from across the aisle, is that they have more principles, not less, when they defend the rights of the mice, as Tommy Douglas would have it, and certainly, for transparency's sake, that when decisions are made by committees—and we have five standing committees already—those decisions are made known, that they're transparent decisions, that they're made known to small business. Because there's no doubt that some of what this government has done has been done on the backs of small business and to the detriment of small business—no question there.

We know that the McGuinty government is really beholden—we can see this from the wonderful work done by the Toronto Star in terms of who funded the Liberal Party in the last election—to banks, insurance companies; big business, in short.

We need more spokespeople for small business in this Legislature. There's no doubt about that. So I commend any imperative to defend small business, but not at the expense of the environment, health care, education and labour laws. In fact, I have a motion on the papers that calls for more inspections of places of employment, not less. We need more regulation, not less.

For regulatory bodies, we need more transparency. For bodies like the OMB that have never been elected, that are not accountable, we need accountability. We need to get rid of bodies that exist like that, that are accountable to no one. That's certainly true.



But where this bill, Bill 57, comes into play—unfortunately, I cannot support it. I cannot support the ideology that supports it, and I cannot support the principles that support it. We in the New Democratic Party are social democrats, and we stand up for the human rights of the majority of people, not the property rights of a few.

**Mr. Jeff Leal:** It is indeed a pleasure to speak this morning and to have an opportunity to reflect on Bill 57.

A wise person once reflected that those who do not learn the lessons of history are doomed to repeat them.

Last night, I took the opportunity to go to the legislative library and pull out the report of the Walkerton inquiry. There was much talk this morning about the Red Tape Commission and what it was doing during those years. I want to just make reference to page 393 of the Walkerton report. It said:

“It was also clear that the Red Tape Commission was focusing on the nature and extent of regulations under the purview of the MOE. The MOE was subject to twice as many recommendations from the commission as any other ministry. In a consultation paper, the MOE stated that environmental protection agencies in many countries were reducing their emphasis on traditional ‘command and control’ regulatory approaches. In its view, there was a trend toward using environmental management approaches that were broader than simply mandatory requirements. This paper was published in July 1996, the same month in which the routine laboratory testing” in Ontario “was privatized. In reviewing the MOE’s regulatory reform package in September 1997, the Red Tape Commission recommended that certain regulations be replaced with voluntary guidelines. In making this recommendation, the commission relied on its position that ‘as a matter of principle, when we ask businesses to be good corporate citizens and in effect to police themselves, those matters should be agreed upon through voluntary agreements, MOUs (memorandums of understanding) and other instruments outside of regulations.’”

Justice O’Connor was extremely clear. He called a number of witnesses in that period of time: the deputy minister of the MOE and several officials within that ministry. They clearly put on the record—and I tell the member, he should take the time to review this report, because it certainly looks very clearly and very squarely—it put the MOE under the light; the Red Tape Commission attacked the Ministry of the Environment, reduced regulations and brought in the privatization of laboratory testing in the province of Ontario and in Justice O’Connor’s words, “was a contributing factor to the tragedy.” Seven people were killed, and still hundreds of people in that fine community are suffering a variety of diseases today, including kidney disease and other diseases directly related to the ingestion of water that was contaminated with *E. coli*.

**Mr. John Yakabuski:** The Koebel brothers.

**Mr. Jeff Leal:** I’m saying very clearly the Koebel brothers were involved, but the work of the Red Tape Commission was clearly acknowledged in O’Connor’s

report as being a contributing factor to the tragedy at Walkerton. If they don’t want to read the full version, if they don’t have time to look at that, there is the summary version of the report on Walkerton: Events of May 2000.

In fact, when Justice O’Connor finished his review, his summary said, “I am satisfied that if the MOE”—I’ll repeat that again—“I am satisfied that if the MOE had adequately fulfilled its regulatory and oversight role, the tragedy in Walkerton would have been prevented (by the installation of continuous monitors) or at least significantly reduced in scope.

“It is worth observing that since the Walkerton tragedy, the government has recognized that improvements were needed in virtually all of the areas where I identify deficiencies and has taken steps to strengthen the MOE’s regulatory or oversight role.”

I can tell you, one of the key issues in my riding in the 2003 provincial election was the need to rebuild Ontario’s public service. They have seen what happened with the meat packer in Aylmer, Ontario. They were there to witness the tragedy that happened in Walkerton, Ontario. They said very clearly that there was a need of investment in key ministries in the province of Ontario to provide the necessary oversight. Those folks over there are living in fairyland if they don’t know the ramifications of the Walkerton inquiry. They should realize that their commission, the Red Tape Commission which they set up, destroyed the regulatory framework of the Ministry of the Environment. O’Connor clearly said that that led directly to some of the problems in the tragedy of Walkerton. We don’t want to go down that road again.

I understand there is a philosophical divide in this House on this issue, but for us over here, we want to make sure that there are resources in place, that we have continuous oversight in those key ministries that people in Ontario depend upon each and every day for the protection of their water, for the protection of their air, for the protection of activities that go on in their workplaces.

That’s what we’re here for and we’ll continue to move ahead in that direction.

**Mr. Norm Miller:** It’s my pleasure to add some comments today—short comments, because we have a lot of speakers who want to speak to the private member’s bill of the member from Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington.

I will start off by saying that the member from Peterborough can spin Walkerton any way he likes, but I think most people recognize that the Koebel brothers were primarily responsible for this disaster. I know the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke described red tape as being mainly a Liberal creation, but in fact the term itself originates from when 18th-century English solicitors tied up their clients’ papers with red ribbon to prevent them from separating. To get at the documents, they literally had to take the time to remove the ribbon. By 1736, the process of formalizing documents by tying them in red tape had come to symbolize excessive bureaucratic process. Since this government has come into power now, in 2008, we have too much red tape.



As has been mentioned, there was in the past a Red Tape Commission. I sat as commissioner on that for my first couple of years in government, and it considered a business impact test for all new regulations; it dealt with the elimination of existing red tape. Let me emphasize that the Progressive Conservative definition of "red tape" does not include measures that are truly needed to protect our health, safety and the environment.

I want to give one example of a case I remember at the Red Tape Commission. I brought in with me to the Red Tape Commission 30 rejection letters from the Ministry of Health for applications for the northern health travel grant. That was because the process required that you had to get a signature for every single trip. So if you have a cancer patient who has 30 trips to get treatment, they need 30 letters signed by the doctor. Of course, when you're a cancer patient, the last thing you want to do is deal with forms.

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Not only that, when you get rejected for your claim, they send a separate letter out for every single claim. I brought all 30 letters in to show this ridiculous process. This Liberal government did away with the Red Tape Commission, and you know what? Today, in 2008, you still get the 30 rejection letters. That is absolutely ridiculous.

I was in small business in the past. I can tell you, as a small business person, you're trying to make a buck; you're trying to look after your clients' needs. Small business is the engine of the economy. It's creating the jobs in our province, and we need to make it so they are able to do their job and create those jobs.

Things have changed in the last number of years. Government used to be helpful. My experience with fire inspectors and the Ministry of Environment was that they would come on your property and be helpful and help you meet the regulations. Now we've become the police state, where the inspectors come in and all they do is lay charges. That's not helpful in terms of meeting the regulations. It's certainly not helpful for the success of those businesses.

I support this legislation. I am very happy to see that the new member has brought it forward, and there is a great need for it. I can tell you that from speaking and meeting with people in my riding.

The issue of meat inspectors was brought up, I think by the member from Huron-Bruce. I met with the OFA and farmers in the northern part of my riding, and what they told me was that the new government inspectors were doing less work than other inspectors. So they wanted more inspection to be able to carry out their work. What you've brought into effect is actually making it worse.

I might also add that this government, as of January 17 of this year, with the passing of the Regulatory Modernization Act, has actually created 200 new inspectors.

I need to sit down to let my other members speak.

**Mrs. Julia Munro:** I am very pleased to be able to participate in the debate this morning. I think one of the disappointments for me, in listening to other members

speak, is that they're not taking into account what this bill actually suggests.

First of all, it suggests that it be a tri-party arrangement. It is not something that would be done in secret. It also does nothing to create the kind of ideological framework that we are being accused of here.

Several people have made reference to the historical burden of red tape. One of the things that struck me when I was looking at this was the fact that in pre-revolutionary France that was one of the burdens that, quite frankly, created the ferment that became the French Revolution—the regulatory burden, the time that it took and the kind of frustration that it led to.

The people who want to push this into an ideological box need to think for a moment about the fact that we recognize that there's a time when a regulation is a method of protection. What we're talking about is when a regulation becomes a method of obstruction of an activity, where it actually, instead of protecting the activity, has now become a method of obstruction.

I think, when you listen to the members on this side, we have given you many examples—first of all, of the growth; secondly, of the kind of third party recognition by both the CFIB and Roger Martin's group. Certainly in my own riding, I'm contacted all the time on issues where people are struggling. Frankly, it becomes such a burden that they give up. They've gone through multiple government offices and phone numbers to get answers. A businessman in my riding recently contacted me about the zoning on a piece of property he owns. The local council has told him that they cannot do anything about it because it's covered by provincial legislation. I wrote on his behalf to the Minister of Municipal Affairs. And what was the answer? "Nothing to do with us. Contact your municipality." Those are the kinds of things that build the kind of cynicism we see around us.

A local doctor wants to set up a family health team in the riding. He wants to bring doctors to an unserved area. What did the Ministry of Health tell him? "We'll add you to the 'expressions of interest' list."

Those are the kinds of things that create the kind of frustration that this member is trying to prevent for all the people of Ontario. It has nothing to do with compromising safety. It has everything to do with, are you buying apples on the roadside? There's a different classification if they're in a bag or in a bin. That's how ridiculous it is when we are talking about red tape.

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier):** The member for Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington, you have two minutes to respond.

**Mr. Randy Hillier:** First off, I'd like to say to the honourable member from Huron-Bruce that it was two drunks in Walkerton, not the Red Tape Commission, that caused the problems there.

*Interjections.*

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier):** I'd like the—

*Interjections.*

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier):** Order. The member for Peterborough, order. I'd like the



member for Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington to consider withdrawing that word.

**Mr. Randy Hillier:** Which one, the drunks—

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier):** You know very well which one.

**Mr. Randy Hillier:** I'll withdraw.

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier):** Thank you.

**Mr. Randy Hillier:** I'd also like to say thank you to all the members here who spoke to this bill, especially the ones who read it and understood what was in it.

It causes me some concern, though, when I hear this debate and I hear the fearfulness of members on the other side, fearful of making decisions. They talk about my wanting to get rid of the bureaucracy. What I'm talking about is having members in this House have control and oversight of the regulations that the businesspeople and members of our province have to be burdened with and have to get through. This is not an attack on bureaucracy. It's not an attack on anybody. It's blaming us for not taking our job seriously.

I would say to the honourable members, I can understand why you don't want to have ownership of regulations. If you are not going to read the legislation before you pass it, it's pretty hard to get good decisions based on ignorance. The Liberals obviously want more red tape, even though their Premier says he wants to reduce red tape. It's just more broken promises from this Liberal government.

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier):** The time provided for private members' public business has expired.

#### STRANDHERD-ARMSTRONG BRIDGE

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier):** We shall first deal with ballot item number 13.

Ms. MacLeod has moved private member's notice of motion number 3. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

After we've dealt with the next item, we'll call in the members.

#### RED TAPE AND REGULATORY REVIEW ACT, 2008

#### LOI DE 2008 SUR LA RÉVISION DES FORMALITÉS ADMINISTRATIVES ET DES DISPOSITIONS RÉGLEMENTAIRES

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier):** We shall now deal with ballot item number 14.

Mr. Hillier has moved second reading of Bill 57. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

We will call in the members on this as well.

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

*The division bells rang from 1159 to 1204.*

#### STRANDHERD-ARMSTRONG BRIDGE

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier):** Ms. MacLeod has moved private member's notice of motion number 3.

All those in favour, please stand until recognized by the Clerk.

#### Ayes

Amott, Ted  
Bailey, Robert  
Chudleigh, Ted  
Hardeman, Ernie  
Hillier, Randy  
Hudak, Tim

Jones, Sylvia  
Klees, Frank  
MacLeod, Lisa  
Miller, Norm  
Munro, Julia  
Ouellette, Jerry J.

Runciman, Robert W.  
Savoline, Joyce  
Scott, Laurie  
Shurman, Peter  
Wilson, Jim  
Yakabuski, John

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier):** All those opposed, please stand and be recognized by the Clerk.

#### Nays

Aggelonitis, Sophia  
Albanese, Laura  
Arthurs, Wayne  
Balkissoon, Bas  
Brotten, Laurel C.  
Brown, Michael A.  
Brownell, Jim  
Cansfield, Donna H.  
Chan, Michael  
Colle, Mike  
Delaney, Bob  
Dickson, Joe  
Flynn, Kevin Daniel

Gerretsen, John  
Hoy, Pat  
Jaczek, Helena  
Jeffrey, Linda  
Kwinter, Monte  
Leal, Jeff  
Levac, Dave  
McNeely, Phil  
Meilleur, Madeleine  
Milloy, John  
Mitchell, Carol  
Naqvi, Yasir  
Oraziotti, David

Pendergast, Leeanna  
Qaadri, Shafiq  
Ramal, Khalil  
Ramsay, David  
Rinaldi, Lou  
Sandals, Liz  
Smith, Monique  
Smitherman, George  
Sousa, Charles  
Takhari, Harinder S.  
Van Bommel, Maria  
Wilkinson, John  
Wynne, Kathleen O.

**The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller):** The ayes are 18; the nays are 39.

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier):** I declare the motion lost.

*Negated.*

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier):** We will now open the doors for 30 seconds before the next vote.

#### RED TAPE AND REGULATORY REVIEW ACT, 2008

#### LOI DE 2008 SUR LA RÉVISION DES FORMALITÉS ADMINISTRATIVES ET DES DISPOSITIONS RÉGLEMENTAIRES

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier):** Mr. Hillier has moved second reading of Bill 57. All those in favour, please stand and be recognized by the Clerk.

#### Ayes

Amott, Ted  
Bailey, Robert  
Chudleigh, Ted  
Hardeman, Ernie  
Hillier, Randy  
Hudak, Tim

Jones, Sylvia  
Klees, Frank  
MacLeod, Lisa  
Miller, Norm  
Munro, Julia  
Ouellette, Jerry J.

Runciman, Robert W.  
Savoline, Joyce  
Scott, Laurie  
Shurman, Peter  
Wilson, Jim  
Yakabuski, John

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier):** All those opposed, please stand and be recognized by the Clerk.

#### Nays

Aggelonitis, Sophia	Gerretsen, John	Pendergast, Leeanna
Albanese, Laura	Hoy, Pat	Qaadri, Shafiq
Arthurs, Wayne	Jaczek, Helena	Ramal, Khalil
Balkissoon, Bas	Jeffrey, Linda	Ramsay, David
Brotten, Laurel C.	Kwinter, Monte	Rinaldi, Lou
Brown, Michael A.	Leal, Jeff	Sandals, Liz
Brownell, Jim	Levac, Dave	Smith, Monique
Cansfield, Donna H.	McNeely, Phil	Smitherman, George
Chan, Michael	Meilleur, Madeleine	Sousa, Charles
Colle, Mike	Milloy, John	Takhar, Harinder S.
Delaney, Bob	Mitchell, Carol	Van Bommel, Maria
Dickson, Joe	Naqvi, Yasir	Wilkinson, John
Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Oraziotti, David	Wynne, Kathleen O.

**The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller):** The ayes are 18; the nays are 39.

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier):** I declare the motion lost.

*Second reading negated.*

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier):** All matters relating to private members' public business having been dealt with, I do now leave the chair, and the House will resume at 1:30 of the clock.

*The House recessed from 1210 to 1330.*

## MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

### ROBERT SHERWOOD

**Mr. Frank Klees:** I rise today to pay tribute to a great Canadian, an exemplary citizen of this province, a dedicated municipal councillor, a tireless community activist and a loyal friend. Above all, Robert Clark Sherwood—"Bob" or "Sherwood" to all who knew him—was a devoted husband to Sally and a very proud father to sons Philip and Michael and daughters Tiffany and Paula.

On April 7, 2008, Bob left behind a legacy that will survive not only his remarkable life but will continue to enrich lives of future generations because of his selfless contributions to people, to organizations, to his community and to our province.

Bob was a man of his word who knew what he believed and why. He was a man of action. When he saw a need, he did what had to be done to meet that need and never hesitated to lean heavily on those around him to help him get the task done. Nowhere was that more evident than in his work to provide transit access to the disabled through the Markham Mobility Foundation.

Bob was always a leader, never a spectator. His contributions as a past president of the Thornhill Community Hockey League were recognized in the naming of a rink in his honour at the Thornhill Community Centre.

In addition to his service as a Markham councillor, Bob served as a member of the Workplace Safety and Insurance Appeals Tribunal, was a teaching professor at Seneca College and was the best salesman I ever met.

Bob Sherwood will never be forgotten. He has left us with memories and a legacy that will inspire his family and his friends for generations to come.

I am honoured to pay this tribute to a good friend here in the Ontario Legislature today.

### HAMILTON EAST KIWANIS BOYS' AND GIRLS' CLUB

**Mr. Paul Miller:** I'm proud to stand in support of a local organization in my riding, the Hamilton East Kiwanis Boys' and Girls' Club. For over 60 years, they have provided recreational and social development programs for youth in Hamilton.

This month, the Hamilton East Kiwanis Boys' and Girls' Club launched their 2008 Send a Kid to Camp campaign. This initiative will provide a summer camp experience for scores of disadvantaged Hamilton children. In support of this initiative, I'm honoured to attend their pasta dinner fundraiser tonight.

Research has shown that summer camp experience has helped children and youth develop self-identity, self-worth, self-esteem, leadership skills and self-respect. In promoting programs like Send a Kid to Camp, it is my hope that the children and youth across Ontario will have the opportunity to access summer camps in their own communities.

In our province, we far too rarely recognize the importance of organizations like Hamilton East Kiwanis Boys' and Girls' Club, who build safe and supportive environments where children and youth can experience new opportunities, overcome barriers, build positive relationships and develop confidence and skills for life.

I am proud of the Hamilton East Kiwanis Boys' and Girls' Club and their history of levelling the playing field and providing opportunities for children and youth to reach their full potential.

I encourage everyone listening to reach out and support their local Kiwanis Boys' and Girls' Clubs, especially on initiatives such as the Send a Kid to Camp campaign.

### WILLIAM PATERSON

**Mrs. Laura Albanese:** I rise in the House today to celebrate the 105th birthday of William Paterson, who lives in my riding of York South-Weston.

Born during the turn of the century, in 1902, Mr. Paterson has survived two world wars, has seen over 30 provincial general elections come and go, has lived through many exciting times and faced memorable challenges in his lifetime.

More recently, Mr. Paterson has been enjoying the finer things in life, like spending time with loved ones, reading a good book and enjoying a good meal. Currently living at the Harold and Grace Baker Centre, a long-term health care facility in York South-Weston, Mr. Paterson enjoys a healthy and social lifestyle that provides him



with an excellent opportunity to interact with his peers in a comfortable and social environment.

As the baby boomer generation eases its way into retirement, the need and demand for these types of facilities will gradually increase. Our government has anticipated this demand and, since 2003, has increased funding for long-term-care facilities by nearly \$800 million, resulting in at least 6,100 new front-line staff for long-term-care residents.

For his many achievements and accomplishments in his long and distinguished life, I would ask everyone to join me in congratulating Mr. Paterson on celebrating his 105th birthday.

#### GEORGE McCAGUE

**Mr. Jim Wilson:** I rise today to congratulate the honourable George Raymond McCague on being named the Elgin Blakely citizen of the year at the Rotary Club of Alliston's annual Rural/Urban Night. It was in Alliston that George served as town councillor, deputy reeve, reeve and mayor between 1960 and 1973.

He served as the warden of the county of Simcoe in 1966 and served again as mayor of the newly amalgamated town of New Tecumseth from 1992 to 1994. He is the first chairman of the Niagara Escarpment Commission and is a founding member and the first chair of the board of governors of Georgian College. He's the only person to have received both a fellowship and an honorary degree from the college.

George was elected to the Ontario Legislature in 1975 and went on to serve as the chair of cabinet and the Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet concurrently for almost a decade. He also served as Minister of Transportation and Communications, Minister of the Environment and Minister of Government Services before retiring from this Legislature in 1990.

In retirement, George has remained an active member of our community, coordinating the driver program for the Canadian Cancer Society. He's also very active with St. John's United Church, the New Tecumseh Improvement Society, the Stevenson Memorial Hospital Foundation and the Nottawasaga Foundation.

I want to thank the Rotary Club of Alliston for recognizing the remarkable life of George R. McCague. I consider myself fortunate to be counted among George's many friends and I wish him and his wife, Brigitte, many more years of good health and happiness. Congratulations, George.

#### BAYCREST

**Mr. Monte Kwinter:** I rise today to speak about one of the greatest hospitals in Ontario and our government's support of the outstanding work that's done there. Baycrest has strong roots and a history reaching back to 1918, when the Ezras Noshem Society collected money door to door to open the Toronto Jewish Old Folks Home in a small semi-detached home. Today, Baycrest provides

care and services to 2,500 people a day, including wellness programs, residential housing and outpatient clinics, a 472-bed nursing home and a 300-bed complex continuing care hospital facility with an acute care unit. Baycrest has also grown into one of the world's premier academic health science centres focused on aging.

Our government recognizes the contribution that Baycrest has made to the community and to science. Through the Ministry of Research and Innovation we are investing \$10 million towards the establishment of the Centre for Brain Fitness and the development of the world's first mobile testing unit for brain diseases. The new Centre for Brain Fitness will support Baycrest and its invaluable work, which is already leading to the discovery of important new tools and approaches to treating diseases associated with aging such as Alzheimer's. The funding from the province matches \$10 million from private donors and builds on a previous \$591,000 provincial investment in the brain project.

This investment is building on Ontario's strength and international leadership in the area of health research and advanced health technologies and on Baycrest's history as an essential part of the community.

#### LEGISLATIVE REFORM

**Mrs. Joyce Savoline:** I rise in the House today to remind the McGuinty government that my caucus colleagues and I will not be bullied out of participating in the democratic process that our constituents and this government's taxpayers have elected all of us to do.

Today, I was expecting to see every committee room in use, full to the rafters with the citizens involved in creating well-rounded legislation and interacting with their elected officials. The reality is, the McGuinty government killed my private member's Bill 42 and countless other members' legislation because they are afraid of hearing from their own citizens. The Premier's office has clearly whipped all of their caucus to vote down the hard work and the democratic initiatives of their fellow members of the Legislature. The Liberal members could barely look me in the eye as they drew the last breath from my bill.

These are dark days in our democratic system, which will go from bad to worse when Minister Bryant's cabinet-friendly changes to the standing orders take place. Once again, a committee in unanimous agreement to involve all parties in the formulation process of new family-friendly standing orders has been usurped by this government for its own purposes, the result of which will set women's rights back 20 years in terms of access to the Ontario Legislature.

Very scary precedents are being set. This is democracy at its worst.

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#### JAY FEDOSOFF

**Mr. Vic Dhillon:** It's with great pleasure that I rise today to celebrate the fine educators of Brampton West.



Their hard work and dedication to our children should be recognized by this House. Recently I was informed that one of our finest educators had been nominated for the prestigious Premier's Award for Teaching Excellence. Earlier this week, it was announced that one of our teachers in Brampton West was awarded this great honour.

It is with genuine enthusiasm that I recognize Mr. Jay Fedosoff, who has been awarded the Premier's Award for Teaching Excellence. He has been selected to receive this honour out of hundreds of other many worthy nominees. Mr. Fedosoff teaches at the Roberta Bondar Public School, which is located in my riding. I'd just like to say hello to all the students who may have their TVs on and are watching question period.

Mr. Fedosoff has been described by his fellow teachers as someone who goes above and beyond the requirements of an educator. His tireless effort to educate our children is an example that all teachers should follow. It will be my pleasure to attend the awards reception to honour Mr. Fedosoff for this outstanding achievement.

### MANUFACTURING JOBS

**Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn:** I rise in the House to share some great news with all members, and that is that Ford of Canada has announced 500 new jobs at the plant's manufacturing facility in the community of Oakville. This great news comes on the heels of a recent announcement of Ford's intention to reopen the Windsor engine plant, resulting in 300 new jobs for that community.

Our government is working with the auto sector so that the next generation of vehicles will be researched, developed and built right here in Ontario. A \$100-million investment from this government's auto investment strategy helped Ford to make a \$1-billion investment in its Oakville plant to a flexible manufacturing facility. That's the first of its kind for Ford in Canada.

Ford's announcement of a third shift is in response to the tremendous demand for its Ford Edge and the Lincoln MKX models, and 229,000 of those have been sold, both built right here in Ontario, right in my community of Oakville. The third shift in Oakville will bring employment in the plant up to 3,500.

I want to recognize the great work that Ford is doing on research and innovation. The R&D centre is developing a large-scale stationary fuel cell system that converts paint shop emissions into hydrogen-rich fuel that generates electricity.

I congratulate Ford of Canada on their success. I know that, moving forward, our government is going to continue to support the type of example shown here of a partnership with a major employer that leads to more jobs and prosperity in this province.

### CORNWALL COMMUNITY HOSPITAL

**Mr. Jim Brownell:** I was bemused to hear my provincial neighbour the good member from Leeds–Grenville commenting negatively about our government's plan for

the Cornwall Community Hospital, in my riding of Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry, during debate yesterday. We know what his party's plan was while they were in government: to issue empty promises and deliver nothing.

Under the governance of Dalton McGuinty, and with the unwavering support of my friend the Minister of Health, my riding is now the beneficiary of a plan that actually involves action. With the recent announcement that the Cornwall Community Hospital's main redevelopment project has now gone to tender, and we now have three hospital projects moving forward in my riding, we have progress.

Combine these with a new community health centre, a new hospice, an increased number of procedures being performed and health care workers who are being respected, and we are in the midst of a health care renaissance that will serve my riding, which will have the most state-of-the-art health care delivery services to be found anywhere in Ontario. This is good news not just for the people of my riding, but for those families and businesses looking to settle there. Quality hospitals are a great incentive. That's our plan.

The Conservative plan, as we recall, was to cut \$3 billion out of health care in Ontario. I would remind my good neighbour that the people of Cornwall, the riding of Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry and all of Ontario had a recent opportunity to decide which plan they believed served them best, except I think perhaps his party leader is in the best position to—

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Thank you. The member from Brant.

### WEARING OF PINS

**Mr. Dave Levac:** On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: In consultation with the whips of all parties, I seek unanimous consent to wear the pins of the League of Ukrainian Canadians in recognition of their efforts to raise awareness of the Holodomor, a man-made famine in Ukraine from 1932 to 33. The pins have been supplied in each of the galleries where required.

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** The member from Brant seeks unanimous consent to don the pins. Agreed? Agreed.

### INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

#### HOLODOMOR MEMORIAL DAY ACT, 2008

#### LOI DE 2008 SUR LE JOUR COMMÉMORATIF DE L'HOLODOMOR

Mr. Levac moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 61, An Act to proclaim Holodomor Memorial Day/ Projet de loi 61, Loi proclamant le Jour commémoratif de l'Holodomor.



**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

*First reading agreed to.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** The member for a short statement.

**Mr. Dave Levac:** If passed, this bill will provide for the declaration of Holodomor Memorial Day on the fourth Sunday in November of each year in the province of Ontario. It will extend an annual commemoration of the victims of the Holodomor to Ontario. A memorial day will provide an opportunity to reflect on and to educate the public about the crimes against humanity that occurred in the Ukraine from 1932 to 1933, in which as many as 10 million Ukrainians perished.

I know that we'll be introducing our very special guests in the gallery shortly.

FISH AND WILDLIFE  
CONSERVATION AMENDMENT ACT  
(DOUBLE-CRESTED  
CORMORANTS), 2008  
LOI DE 2008 MODIFIANT LA LOI  
SUR LA PROTECTION DU POISSON  
ET DE LA FAUNE  
(CORMORANS À AIGRETTES)

Mr. Brown moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 62, An Act to amend the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Act, 1997 / Projet de loi 62, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1997 sur la protection du poisson et de la faune.

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

*First reading agreed to.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** The member for a short statement.

**Mr. Michael A. Brown:** This bill amends the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Act, 1997, to permit the hunting of double-crested cormorants. I thank our former colleague Ernie Parsons for this bill.

### VISITORS

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** On behalf of the member from Dufferin-Caledon: Seated in the west members' gallery, we'd like to welcome the board and staff from Families for a Secure Future.

*Applause.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Remember, we are going to hold our applause until the end—I think at the request of you.

On behalf of the member from Newmarket-Aurora: In the west members' gallery, we'd like to welcome Carol Cologna of Newmarket.

On behalf of the member from Mississauga-Erindale, we'd like to welcome Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam, former president of India, and His Excellency R.L. Narayan, High Commissioner of India, who are visiting the Ontario Legislature today.

On behalf of page Georgia LaMarre: In the west public gallery, we would like to welcome Kathy LaMarre, her grandmother; Moe LaMarre, her grandfather; and Janice LaMarre, her aunt.

On behalf of the member from Brant: In the west public gallery, I'd like to welcome his guests Olexander Danyleiko, Oleh Romanyshyn, Chrystyna Bidiak, Orest Steciw, Andrew Gregorovich, Irene Mycak, Oksana Prociuk Ciz, Paul Grod, Mark Shwec, Dr. John Skrypuch, Mrs. Peggy Galan, Mrs. Zena Semiwoles, Father Stephan Didur, Mrs. Anna Lagoznik and Mr. Jerry Lagoznik.

Welcome to all of our guests here today.

**Ms. Cheri DiNovo:** On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I'd like, with unanimous consent, to move a motion that, in the opinion of this House, the government of Ontario should immediately declare the day April 17 a day to commemorate Holodomor, the genocide of the Ukrainian people.

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Is there consent for this motion?

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** I heard a no. Order, please. It's now time for oral questions.

1350

### ORAL QUESTIONS

#### MANUFACTURING JOBS

**Mr. Ted Chudleigh:** My question is to the Deputy Premier. Today, it was announced that hundreds more Ontario workers will soon become unemployed. At GM in Oshawa, 1,000 more workers have been handed pink slips; in Cambridge, at the Closetmaid plant, 500 will soon be wondering how to feed their families; and the list goes on and on.

There are economic forces at work in Ontario that employers and employees cannot control, and so they look to their government for help and guidance. But instead of reacting accordingly, the Premier stubbornly stands by his policies of patchwork patronage and partisanship.

Manufacturers are worried, unions are worried, investors are worried—everyone but this government seems to be worried. Acting Premier, without blaming anyone or anything else, why are you so lackadaisically allowing Ontario to become a have-not province?

**Hon. George Smitherman:** First off, I think an important point is that we, on behalf of the people of Ontario, simply don't share the pessimism and negativity that is inherent in the opposition benches. Of course, an example of the honourable member's reach is to raise the circumstance related to General Motors, where the events relate to a strike in the supply chain.

We do recognize, of course, that factors beyond Ontario's borders and control—related to softness in the US economy, as one example—do have implications in



Ontario. That's why we've been very proud to make investments in the people of Ontario, in the recognition that Ontario's economic interests are based on the strong foundation of the quality of the minds and capabilities of our people and the capacity of our infrastructure to respond. These are foundational elements of our strategy, and they stand in contrast to the negativity—

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Thank you. Supplementary.

**Mr. Ted Chudleigh:** I see you couldn't resist blaming the United States. The Deputy Premier's optimism is endearing, but inappropriate when hundreds of thousands of Ontarians suffer because of his inaction.

If you were truly on the right track, would unemployment continue to grow? I say no. Would workers and employers continue to flee in record numbers from Ontario? No. Would we continue to shed private sector jobs at this alarming rate? I say no. Would the only growth exist in high-paid bureaucratic jobs? I say no. Even with your tax-and-spend policies, would teachers and nurses be laid off? I say no. And would economists be predicting that Ontario will soon be a have-not province? I say no.

Deputy Premier, your economic programs are clearly not working. Would you listen to the economists who cry for effective, wide-ranging and long-term reforms that address Ontario's lagging competitiveness? Will you read the writing on the wall and take action?

**Hon. George Smitherman:** Even when the writing on the wall is in front of the honourable member's nose, he still can't read it right. As an example, he wants to drive down Ontario by talking about employment. In January, February and March, job gains: 57,300, 97% of them from the private sector—29,000 in construction; 6,000 in professional, scientific and technical services; and other business services created 18,000 new jobs.

The honourable member says don't dare relate the fact that Ontario, the most trade-oriented jurisdiction in the world, might have some influence from being a border community to the United States and the softness of their economy. Of course that can't be any part of the explanation for the challenges in Ontario. Every economist knows that's part of it.

What we're looking for from the other side is a change in position from the negativity—

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Thank you. Final supplementary.

**Mr. Ted Chudleigh:** It must be nice to be so blissfully unaware. The Premier would rather defend his own failing promises than admit his mistakes and begin the long, hard, arduous journey to healing our economy. Handouts and welfare for giant corporations here and there will not help the 82% of Ontario workers who are employed by small and medium-sized businesses. Excessive taxes will not bring in revenues for public services when all the businesses have left town. Perhaps the Premier thinks that he doesn't need to reach out to the little guy during non-election years, but he'll be sorry when his legacy is tainted by economic failure.

Premier, will you do the right thing now and save Ontario from the McGuinty recession?

**Hon. George Smitherman:** Ontarians, it seems, need to be saved from the pessimism and negativity that run at the core of the opposition party in the province of Ontario. Imagine speaking about our province that way and speaking about the people of the province of Ontario that way.

On the issue of taxes, just as one example, we've taken initiatives to cut business taxes—and they voted against them—to reduce the business education taxes and to expedite that initiative, as an example, in northern Ontario. They voted against that initiative. But they come to this Legislature every day and they say, "Just give away billions of dollars in revenue that are depended upon to fund the core services in the province of Ontario." Then, in the very next breath, they talk about those areas where they would like to see additional public investment and expenditure made.

Not only are they negative, but their policies are incoherent; on the one hand, saying, "Give back billions of dollars in revenue," and on the other hand saying, "Spend more on services." We know where they took us last time when they had the chance and we're not going back.

## LEGISLATIVE REFORM

**Mr. Robert W. Runciman:** My question is for the Deputy Premier and has to do with the proposed rule changes. Given the Premier's remarks yesterday, since he's not here today, I guess he's not working.

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** I just remind the honourable member that we don't make reference to if members are present or not.

### *Interjection.*

**Mr. Robert W. Runciman:** Giving direction to the Speaker now—I want to read a quote for the Deputy Premier: "Your democracy should work in your best interests, not in the best interests of the party in power. The rules of the Ontario Legislature should help your elected MPPs represent you, not make it easier for the Premier and his unelected advisors and spin doctors to shut you out."

I wonder, Deputy Premier, if you remember that promise from the Liberal Party's 2003 platform? Your rule changes do just the opposite of your promise. You're shutting the public out, you're shutting the opposition out, and you're shutting the press gallery out. Will you stop, and refer it to a committee in the Legislature?

**Hon. George Smitherman:** In a moment, I'll look forward to the chance for the government House leader to add to this discussion on our behalf, but a couple of points that I think are very salient: Firstly, the honourable member ought to know that we have memories. We remember that when Mike Harris was the Premier, he didn't even come to question period. We remember a party that actually took the budget of the government of Ontario out of the Legislature and took it to Magna. We know the party—they sit right there—that did not even



send bills to legislative committees. So the honourable member, a veteran of this House, ought to know that people have memories as well.

On this point that they're pretending around, the honourable member misunderstands deliberately what was said yesterday. The Premier spoke very directly about the necessity of members having Fridays in their riding; that's why it was one of the alterations that was made from the earlier proposal. We recognized that the important work of members is not just here in the Legislature, but elsewhere, and it's no good for the honourable member—

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Thank you. Supplementary.

**Mr. Robert W. Runciman:** I think we all heard what the Premier said, and it was demeaning to anyone who serves in this place. In terms of the memory of the minister, it's what you would describe as a selective memory. He seems to have memory failure when it comes to commitments made by his party. I would suggest that's caused by a virus known as majority government.

I have another quote for the minister to forget his party ever made: "We will bring a team approach to governing. We will respect and draw on the talents and expertise of every representative, including opposition members." There's another promise lost in the ether of unfettered power with a Liberal majority government. There was no real consultation. These changes are being force-fed to serve the interests of the Liberal government.

Will the Deputy Premier explain why it's in the best interests of the public to schedule question period in the morning, making it less likely the public will attend, limiting noon-hour electronic coverage—

1400

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Thank you. Deputy Premier?

**Hon. George Smitherman:** To the government House leader.

**Hon. Michael Bryant:** I say to the member that the government believes it is in the public interest, because we are expanding debate time; we are increasing MPP private members' business, something that I believe was proposed by the official opposition already; and we are also eliminating evening sittings, which I know was a subject of great concern to the official opposition in many discussions with respect to how the Legislature ought to be run. We believe it is in the public interest, because the Legislature will be working in the morning and the afternoon, we will have more debate time and we'll have more private members' business.

**Mr. Robert W. Runciman:** With the way the government House leader has handled this issue, he has become the poster boy for Liberal arrogance. There's been absolutely no consultation in a meaningful way with the opposition parties.

It's bad enough for the opposition to be treated shabbily, but the government is treating the media with the same disdain, and this is becoming a pattern. We saw it with the efforts of the Minister of Economic Develop-

ment and Trade to hide her trip to China from the press. We saw it with the Premier's goons chasing press gallery members away from the meeting—

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** I ask that you withdraw the comment referring to staff as you did.

**Mr. Robert W. Runciman:** How do you know they are staff? Anyway, I withdraw.

They chased the press gallery away from a meeting the Premier had with Chinese officials. This is a government with an agenda of media manipulation and control. These rule changes will reduce media access up to 50%, and I ask the House leader to halt the process, keep his party's promises and refer this issue to an all-party legislative committee.

**Hon. Michael Bryant:** The facts are the opposite. In fact, access to the executive by the media will take place, obviously, before question period, during question period and, as is the tradition, in the scrums after question period. In addition to that, the executive will appear in the afternoons during routine proceedings, on the way in to routine proceedings and on the way out of routine proceedings, in addition to caucus and cabinet meetings, at which members of the executive council and MPPs will be available on the way in to those meetings and on the way out of those meetings. The official opposition seems to be describing the situation that existed between 1995 and 2003, not the situation we're seeking to create with these reforms.

## LEGISLATIVE REFORM

**Ms. Andrea Horwath:** My question is also to the Deputy Premier. His government is not fooling anyone by calling their anti-democratic changes family friendly. Refusing to convene a family-friendly legislative committee and ramming the rules through the House without committee review at all is not family friendly or democratic. When will the Deputy Premier admit that the rule changes that are supposed to be family friendly are anything but?

**Hon. George Smitherman:** To the government House leader.

**Hon. Michael Bryant:** I say to the member that the number one concern expressed by members of the official opposition and the third party—that was focused upon—with respect to how this House runs was evening sittings. It is the crux of this proposal that the time that would otherwise be spent in evening sittings is now being spent in the morning and in the afternoon. It means that evening sittings are all but eliminated. It is in that way that the government proposal is seeking to address the very issue that the member is speaking to. I appreciate what the member has said, and listened to her caucus colleagues on the subject of a 9 a.m. or 9:30 a.m. question period start. It was on that basis that we moved it forward. Surely all members of this House can agree that getting to this place at 10:45 a.m. every day is—

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Thank you. Supplementary?



**Ms. Andrea Horwath:** I think that what the government House leader would admit, which everyone in this House knows, is that the family-friendly committee never even met. The government made all these decisions without any committee process whatsoever—totally undemocratic. The rule changes are not about anything to do with night sittings; they're about pushing question period up to the first part of the day, and that is also profoundly anti-democratic. This is a direct attack on the most important accountability mechanism in the British parliamentary system, and everybody in this chamber knows it.

A government that tries to shut down opposition by undermining question period is an arrogant government with something to hide. Why is this government so adamant about getting rid of oversight and accountability in this chamber?

**Hon. Michael Bryant:** Again, the opposite is true. There is in fact more accountability, because there's more debate time. The member wants more accountability to the media. I say to the member, instead of stories being filed immediately after question period and there being no opportunity for any of the three parties to fact-check and make counter-arguments, now question period will be finished in time for all three parties to participate in a debate afterwards, if you want to focus on the media.

If you want to focus on the Legislature, I say to the member, we have more debate time. Surely the member isn't trying to tell me that the debate that takes place in this place in the evening is something worth salvaging. You argued for getting rid of evening sittings. You argued for more debate times. That's exactly what's in this proposal.

**Ms. Andrea Horwath:** Depriving the opposition of the appropriate time that it needs to prepare for question period is profoundly anti-democratic and does not serve the best interest of Ontarians. In fact, as a Globe and Mail columnist noted today, "it's not too trite to say that democracy depends on a good grilling of ministers." Why is this government launching a direct attack on democracy?

**Hon. Michael Bryant:** I think it is going to be very difficult to convince the people who we represent that a 10:45 a.m. question period is an assault on anything. I remind the member that question period length is exactly the same. The certainty around when question period starts is finally entrenched.

**Hon. James J. Bradley:** The longest question period in Canada.

**Hon. Michael Bryant:** It is the longest question period in Canada, the member and the co-dean of this Legislature reminds me.

No more evening sittings. More debate time. In fact, we have more private members' business. This is an effort to modernize the Legislature. And as the official opposition has called for, there will be an opportunity for a committee to review it over the summer, and this Legislature will have a chance to review it again in the fall. That's a lot more consideration than what happened

when that party was in power, and when that party was in power.

## WORKPLACE SAFETY

**Mr. Paul Miller:** My question is to the Minister of Labour. Minister, for many, many years, New Democrats and our sisters and brothers in the labour movement have called for an end to the perverse incentives to employers under the WSIB's experience rating program. The minister has admitted that this program doesn't work. How many more workers in this province need to be injured or killed before the minister finally does the right thing and pulls the plug on this program?

**Hon. Brad Duguid:** I thank the member for the question, and I wonder whether he listened to the responses in the two previous times that he's asked the question. The chair of the WSIB has, along with myself, suggested that indeed the experience rating system is in need of reform. That is precisely why the chair has embarked on a review that he hopes will come forward sooner rather than later. In the long shot—it may be, potentially, about a 12-month review. He's going to try to reduce that time because we do want to see some reforms to that initiative.

This is but one part of our efforts to try to reduce workplace injuries. The 200 additional health and safety inspectors that we have hired are doing a very effective job in increasing workplace safety. I'll be looking forward in a speech to a group on Monday afternoon or morning—I can't remember which—discussing how far we've gone in reaching our goals.

**Mr. Paul Miller:** The minister likes to pretend that he has a completely arm's-length relationship with the WSIB. He likes to pretend that he has no influence over the timing of the WSIB program reviews. It states clearly in the memorandum of understanding between the ministry and the WSIB that a minister can direct the auditor to do an audit of any WSIB program. If he won't end the program immediately, when will this minister use the authority he has and bring the Auditor General to review the deeply flawed experience rating program?

1410

**Hon. Brad Duguid:** The chair is reviewing the program. He's looking at ways to make the program better and more effective, and that's something I would think the member opposite would support. Obviously, he doesn't; obviously, he's looking for something else.

But our priority is the health and safety of workers across this province, and that's why we hired 200 additional health and safety officers; that's why the WSIB and the Ministry of Labour are working in partnership to make sure that workers and employers right across this province are aware of their rights and obligations to ensure that the health and safety of workers are protected.

This isn't a government of half measures; we want to do everything we possibly can. Unlike the NDP, we want to do everything we possibly can to improve the health and safety of workers across this province. That's why we want to look at a more effective incentive program,



that's why we're continuing to invest in enforcement like no party has before us and that's why we'll continue to work with our partners—

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Thank you. Final supplementary.

**Mr. Paul Miller:** I must say, that's an amazing statement from the minister. This has been going on for 10 years, under his watch. And he challenges me that I'm not considering supporting something? Who do you think is complaining about it?

Last week, I raised the case of Gordie Heffern, who died in 2001 from injuries he suffered in an explosion in a Sudbury nickel refinery. His employer was fined \$375,000. In the year after the incident, the employer received an experience rating rebate from the WSIB totaling \$5 million. Good safety program, Minister.

We're talking about real people here, but this government is rewarding companies with a perverse program that undermines health and safety, forces people back to work before they're ready to go back and enables companies to hide accident reports while reaping huge profits. I'll give the minister one more chance to show that he cares. Why won't he commit to the ending of this immoral—

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Thank you. Minister?

**Hon. Brad Duguid:** Unlike previous governments—I think the experience rating originally came in under the NDP, and of course it was accentuated under the Tories—when we see something that needs fixing, we do it. That's why the chair of the WSIB is actively engaged in a review to fix this system.

We agree that the system needs fixing and we're going to fix that system. But we're going to ensure that as we fix the incentives and make sure that the incentives are more effective, we're also going to continue our good work in enforcement and work hard to meet the goals that were set five years ago.

I'll have an opportunity on Monday to make an announcement to indicate just how far we've gotten, but I can tell you that we're very much in keeping with meeting our goal of a 20% reduction in workplace injuries. That's what it's all about: improving the health and safety in workplaces across this province.

#### LEGISLATIVE REFORM

**Ms. Lisa MacLeod:** My question is for the Acting Premier. Which part of the following from the government House leader do you disagree with?

"I believe we have unanimous consent to put forward a motion concerning a panel of members to consider ways to make the assembly more family friendly....

"Thanks to the House leaders for the official opposition and the third party and to the government caucus as well.

"I move that the House leaders of the recognized parties shall agree to terms, and an all-party panel composed of no more than two members from each recognized

party shall be appointed to make recommendations to the Speaker on ways to make working at the Ontario Legislature more family friendly for members of provincial Parliament."

What changed between December 11, 2007, and yesterday?

**Hon. George Smitherman:** To the government House leader.

**Hon. Michael Bryant:** There is a word for what the member is doing right now, but it's unparliamentary. If the member kept reading the motion, the member would know—

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** The Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal.

Anything that causes any disorder in the House—if there's any sense of that, I would just ask that members please be conscious. Withdraw.

**Hon. Michael Bryant:** Withdrawn.

The member knows very well—because we had a number of conversations about this, and the member's House leader knows and in fact the House leader for the third party knows—that when it comes to the standing order changes, there was a very clear understanding that discussions of those standing order changes were not going to be delegated to that committee but were rather going to be dealt with by the House leaders. The House leaders don't agree with what the government has come forward with, but the House leaders retain the discretion to discuss it. So the member knows that that committee that she is raising there and that she brought forward and we all supported in fact does not deal with the standing order changes.

**Ms. Lisa MacLeod:** I'm not sure who he was speaking with over here, but he certainly hasn't responded to any of my letters in the last three months.

I'm not sure. What part of "unanimous consent" does he not understand? What happened between December 11, 2007, and yesterday? Is it second-term-itis? Are you complacent, a little arrogant? You don't think you have to work with us; you can dictate to us?

On December 11, the Liberals unanimously supported an all-party committee to make Queen's Park more family friendly. Yesterday, the Liberals tabled a unilateral cabinet-friendly motion to change the rules here without ever striking a family-friendly panel, even though they've used the term to hide behind.

My question again to the Acting Premier: How does the government plan to restore parliamentary democracy in this place when they abuse the rules by disregarding unanimous decisions of this Legislature?

**Hon. Michael Bryant:** What happened between February 11—the day after the Premier notified all members of this House of the proposed changes—and today, when that very member said, "I'm encouraged that the government is thinking outside the box and looking at ways to make the Legislature more family friendly"?

I say to the member, she is opposing it for reasons which I don't understand. I agree with her statement on



February 11. I don't know what happened to the member's view between February 11 until now, but I can assure the member that the government looks forward to this debate over the coming weeks and looks forward to the opportunity, in the event that this order passes, to have it reviewed over the summer and come back to the Legislature again.

I can assure the member, that is so much more consultation and debate than what happened when that party was in power.

### SCHOOL CLOSURES

**Mr. Rosario Marchese:** My question is to the Minister of Education. I used to know Minister Wynne in a former role, when she used to speak passionately against school closures—spirited in her defence of small schools. I used to know the Liberal Party on this issue as well. The minister's colleague Gerard Kennedy, a former minister, told the Conservatives on a regular basis, "You're ripping the heart out of communities when you close schools." That used to be the Liberal brand. What happened to Kathleen Wynne, the person whom trustees and parents knew and loved?

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** I remind the member that we refer to ridings or ministries, please. Thank you.

Minister?

**Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne:** She's right here.

I want to address the issue of the plan that the Toronto District School Board is putting forward. The Toronto District School Board has entered into an exercise. They put out a report yesterday, and I want to just read some of the things that they are considering, because I think the reality is that every board—and in this year, when there is a government in place that is putting more money into the board, this board has 31,000 fewer students and we put \$360 million into the board—and still, boards need capital plans.

Here's what the board is looking at: They're looking at ways to address capital assets and programs in the development of a plan going forward. "Is there a preferred grade structure for our schools to support student success? Should we set standards to achieve the optimal size of the school?" Those questions are exactly the kinds of questions that boards should be looking at as they plan going forward.

**Mr. Rosario Marchese:** Here is what Mr. McGuinty used to say to former Premier Eves:

"You should know, and I'm sure the minister would be interested in listening to this"—actually, it was the minister—"that in the States today they are moving toward smaller schools, taking a large high school, for example, and cutting it into four, because they've learned that better learning takes place in a smaller school environment."

Boards in Ontario are seriously considering the closure of many schools: Thames Valley, Near North, Upper Grand, Niagara-on-the-Lake, Hamilton-Wentworth

Catholic, Toronto District, Keewatin-Patricia, Rainy River and Lakehead, among others. Will the real Minister Wynne stop the school closure epidemic?

1420

**Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne:** It would be fundamentally irresponsible for us, in a climate of declining enrolment—in 60 of our 72 boards, there are going to be 90,000 fewer students next year than there were in 2003. Every school board in this province has to deal with this reality. The member opposite's former colleague, Irene Atkinson, who is the trustee in Parkdale-High Park and as good an NDPer as he is, has been part of this process. What she says is, "I'm not a fan of it, but it's something we absolutely must get on with.... We can't be like ostriches with our heads in the sand and say it's business as usual."

That is exactly where the board needs to go. They need a capital plan. They recognize that they have \$360 million more and 31,000 fewer students.

### ROAD SAFETY

**Mr. Dave Levac:** My question is for the Minister of Transportation. Road safety is paramount to every resident in Ontario. Nobody has a monopoly on wanting to keep our roads safe. As our population increases, we know that the number of drivers on the roads does too. I know that this government has done many things to improve road safety—along with previous governments that have done things to improve road safety—including the announcement today.

We have done stuff like improving bus safety rules, continued road and highway repairs, construction worker protection while they're working on the highway, recent truck speed regulations coming forward for us to decide on, and OPP officer protection—turning to the left when you see the lights.

I'm hoping the minister can share with my constituents and with all of us in Ontario just what the announcement was and what we are going to do for further safety regulations.

**Hon. James J. Bradley:** That's an excellent question from the member. Road safety, as you know, is something that is important to every Ontarian, and even though we enjoy some of the safest roads in all of North America, there is always more we can do to keep our communities and our roads safe.

Earlier this morning, I had the pleasure of joining a number of Ontario's road safety partners at a CAA driver training centre to announce an overhaul of Ontario's beginner driver education program. We understand that every single person enrolled in a beginner driver education course needs to receive quality driver education from qualified instructors, and our new beginner driver education curriculum standards have been introduced to do just that. The new curriculum standards clearly reflect our high expectations of novice drivers, with tough new standards to give novice drivers the skills they need to stay safe on the roads of Ontario.



I know that the member will want to explore this further in a supplementary question.

**Mr. Dave Levac:** Indeed I shall. My constituents, as well as all constituents in Ontario, want to feel confident, when they enrol their children in driving school and when family members and friends enrol in driving school, that these beginner driver education students are learning the skills they need to drive safely and correctly on our highways. We all want to have the confidence and abilities of other drivers we share the roads with every day.

I know that there are very good driver education instructors, and we cannot be criticizing those who did a great job for us over the years. There have been those, unfortunately, who have not behaved properly. We know that we want to get them away from teaching our kids bad habits, or not teaching them at all.

Can the Minister of Transportation please tell this House exactly what the new curriculum is, and, for that matter, how those instructors will be improved and how we're going to accomplish that in as little time as possible?

**Hon. James J. Bradley:** I certainly can. This curriculum, as you know, reflects the work of many experts in the field. My ministry partnered with the Canadian Standards Association and industry stakeholders to design and develop an effective set of curriculum standards that reflect the challenges new drivers face on today's roads. We also sought advice from several road safety organizations, including the Traffic Injury Research Foundation, the Ontario Safety League and the Insurance Bureau of Canada.

Our new curriculum requirements have been designed to zero in on the needs of novice drivers by giving them the tools they need to drive safely, which include dealing with driver distractions, responding effectively to hazards on the road, sharing the road with others, learning about the dangers of impaired driving and making responsible choices before getting behind the wheel of a car. This is the kind of skill and knowledge that new drivers need when making—

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Thank you, Minister. New question.

#### ACCESS TO HEALTH CARE

**Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer:** My question is for the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. This week, Dr. Dennis Psutka, a veteran ER doctor who worked for seven years as the deputy minister responsible for ER services, remarked that the long waits in the emergency room departments today are the worst he has ever seen.

In fact, according to the Hamilton Spectator on April 15, Dr. Psutka stated,

"When I came to work this morning, there were 19 holdovers (patients) admitted into ER rooms who were still waiting for beds ... I'm sitting here and watching and all I can say is 'For shame.... We are in trouble.'"

Minister, these patients can't be admitted, because there are 105 people at Hamilton Health Sciences waiting

for long-term care and 105 at St. Joe's alternative level. When are you going to keep your five-year promise to unclog the emergency departments?

**Hon. George Smitherman:** I'm very pleased that in our government's recent budget we've been able to identify some resources that, alongside other resources that are being deployed at present, will be able to enhance the circumstance in some of Ontario's hospital emergency rooms.

I agree that they're not serving consistently at a level that is satisfactory. Accordingly, that's why we've asked Dr. Alan Hudson, who has very successfully implemented our wait times strategy, to move forward on that. The wait times strategy, by the way, today received a very glowing report from the Wait Times Alliance, part of the Canadian Medical Association, which gives us every hope that we can make substantial progress on what is obviously a key irritant for health care practitioners and a very sizable challenge as well for too many of our patients.

**Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer:** It's unbelievable that this minister would stand in his place after almost five years and not have a plan to unclog emergency rooms. He has been warned on how many different occasions by doctors, patients and everybody else in this province?

I would say to you, there was no new, immediate funding to address the emergency room problems, and that's pointed out in the newspaper article as well. In that same article, it indicates that Hamilton officials estimate that there may be about 100 times this year when there's only one ambulance, or not one ambulance at all, available to respond to emergencies. And you know why. Because the paramedics have to wait at the hospital until they can discharge their patients. There are no beds, so they can't admit them.

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Question.

**Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer:** I again refer you to Dr. Psutka's comments. The situation is the worst he's ever seen. When are you going to do more than give us empty rhetoric about doing something in the future—

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Thank you, Minister?

**Hon. George Smitherman:** Firstly, the honourable member obviously isn't able to read the budget. If she were, she would know that there are additional resources allocated for the purposes of emergency room backlogs. I look forward to estimates where I can take the former minister through the budget and show her what health care investments look like. In addition, I can say that there's an additional \$90 million for aging at home.

But to the point the honourable member raises in her very own community of Kitchener-Waterloo, we've worked very vigorously at Grand River and substantially improved the performance of the emergency room there. This is a very good example of what we can do in a variety of other sites across the province of Ontario.

With respect to the circumstances in Hamilton, with respect to some of the challenges related to 911 response calls, I can tell the honourable member that within a very



few short weeks we'll be in a position to make an announcement that should substantially benefit that circumstance. We're working very vigorously, with great leadership in the form of Dr. Alan Hudson. He's been lauded for his efforts—

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Thank you. New question.

1430

### DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

**Ms. Andrea Horwath:** My question is for the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services. Eight-year-old Jared Osidacz was murdered by his father, a convicted spousal abuser, with whom this government actually made a deal to spare him jail time. What compelling reason has this minister received from the coroner—

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** The comment is not in order.

**Ms. Andrea Horwath:** I'll withdraw.

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Thank you.

**Ms. Andrea Horwath:** What compelling reason has this minister received from the coroner, and what written explanation he has been given for refusing the stand-alone inquest into Jared's death?

**Hon. Rick Bartolucci:** I addressed the question yesterday, and let me reinforce: I am very, very confident that the inquest the coroner's office will be holding will be able to provide the answers to a hurting mother and a hurting grandfather. I am very confident that the concerns that mother has will be addressed in the inquest, as the chief coroner has certainly communicated to us, and to the public at large through the media, that the questions will certainly be answered during that inquest.

**Ms. Andrea Horwath:** But the question was about what the reasons were that the coroner had for not having a stand-alone inquest. However, the minister is deciding to hide Jared's death behind his murderer's inquest. That's his choice.

But if the minister even had a vestige of compassion, the slightest softening of his steely heart, he would use the powers he has under section 22 of the Coroners Act to ensure justice for the murder of this little boy, Jared. Instead, the McGuinty government is dragging the mother and her family through hell once again. Jared and his mother were victims of a horrendous domestic violence situation. The McGuinty government failed to protect them from it in the first place. Why is the minister failing them again by not ordering the stand-alone inquest?

**Hon. Rick Bartolucci:** I hope that at the end of the day the process doesn't fail the hurting mother and the hurting grandfather. I am confident that in no way will Jared's death be lost in the pending inquest. The chief coroner has provided information that questions related to Jared's death will be dealt with. I believe that it is very important that this inquest be allowed to go through the normal process and bring back the recommendations.

I look forward to the results of the inquest. I am confident. I hope, with all my heart—be it a steely heart,

as she would say; I hope it's a compassionate heart—that those questions from that hurting mother are answered in the inquest.

### CHILDREN'S TREATMENT CENTRES

**Mrs. Liz Sandals:** My question is for the Minister of Children and Youth Services. KidsAbility is a treatment centre that provides services for families and children from my riding and from a number of others in the area. KidsAbility supports children who have both physical and developmental disabilities. KidsAbility provides important services, including physiotherapy, occupational therapy and speech and language therapy.

My colleague from Kitchener-Conestoga had the privilege of meeting this week with Stephen Swatridge, who is the CEO of KidsAbility, and Gary Pooley, who is the chair of the board. I've also met regularly, as has my colleague from Kitchener Centre, over the last several years to discuss treatment services for children. Happily, they are expanding in our area. Could the minister please inform the House what our government is doing to help KidsAbility provide these crucial services for children who—

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Thank you. Minister of Children and Youth Services.

**Hon. Deborah Matthews:** I'd like to thank the member for Guelph-Wellington for her advocacy for KidsAbility, and also all of the members in the region: the member for Kitchener-Conestoga, the member for Kitchener Centre, and also the member for Kitchener-Waterloo—although I must say I'm having a little difficulty reconciling her support for increased funding for KidsAbility and her opposition to all of the investments we've made for kids, and their continued advice to cut taxes and, presumably, services.

However, KidsAbility is a superb children's treatment centre. I want to take this opportunity to thank their board, their management and their staff for the great work they are doing. I'm proud to say we've increased funding to KidsAbility by over 30% since we were elected in 2003. They're receiving well over \$1 million more each year to help provide better services for children. KidsAbility provides essential support for children in the Kitchener-Waterloo region and I look forward to continuing to work with them.

**Mrs. Liz Sandals:** I know that the people in my riding of Guelph and throughout Waterloo and Wellington appreciate hearing that our government places such value on the good work of KidsAbility.

I know also that this past Friday, my colleague from Kitchener-Conestoga had the privilege of attending the Kids Can't Wait radiothon. Parents and community members, together with local radio stations such as 570 Talk News and 96.7 CHYM FM, raised over \$200,000 in support of KidsAbility. In June, I'm going to participate in Guelph's fundraiser for KidsAbility. They're doing a walkathon.

We know how valuable these services are, not just in our area but throughout the province. Could the minister



indicate what our government has done to support children's treatment centres across—

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Thank you. Minister of Children and Youth Services.

**Hon. Deborah Matthews:** In our recent budget, we provided \$15 million in capital funding for community agencies that serve children and youth, including \$3 million for children's treatment centres. This funding is in addition to \$4 million we provided to CTCs last year and \$10 million in 2006-07. In fact, since we were elected, we've increased funding to CTCs by about \$30 million.

I can assure you that we are working diligently to help provide greater access to services for special-needs children and youth. I'm proud of what we've been able to do. We've almost tripled the number of kids receiving autism treatment. We're providing 3,000 families with respite services and helping 800 kids with autism attend summer camp.

Thanks to our investments, over 10,000 more children with mental health issues are receiving services than when we took office. We'll continue to support children with special needs so they have the opportunity to achieve their potential.

#### SERVICES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

**Ms. Sylvia Jones:** Speaker, a real question. It's for the Minister of Community and Social Services. Families for a Secure Future is a provincial organization serving 80 individuals with developmental—

*Interjections.*

**Ms. Sylvia Jones:** Community and Social Services. Do I get some time back for that?

**Interjection:** Go ahead.

**Ms. Sylvia Jones:** Families for a Secure Future is a provincial organization serving 80 individuals with developmental disabilities and their families. They have been working with your ministry since January when they were told that the 25-year funding they had secured from a private foundation had stopped. Minister, we both know the excellent work that Families for a Secure Future has been able to achieve with three part-time staff in the past seven years. You know that the \$90,000 they're asking for wouldn't cover a single crisis bed if one of these families has a setback—

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Thank you. Minister of Community and Social Services.

**Hon. Madeleine Meilleur:** First of all, let me thank the member of the opposite party for her question, and I want to thank the members of the board who are here today from Families for a Secure Future for being part of a meeting today and also for the hard work they are doing in the community.

Our government remains committed to supporting organizations that do great work like they do. That's why we provided them with the \$24,000 they requested to help them finish their year this year.

Over our mandate, the McGuinty government has provided almost half a billion dollars in annual funding for the developmental service sector. That is an increase of 34% since 2002-03. This includes the very good passport program that we have—

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Thank you. Supplementary?

**Ms. Sylvia Jones:** Minister, I know you're concerned I'm concerned. The families who are in the gallery are concerned. But we need some action, and you're the minister and the only person in this House who can act. Your government is closing residential facilities, yet you're not providing families with the support they need in the community. You know your inaction will force some of the families into crises. Over 130 people in your ministry earn over \$100,000 a year, and you're telling me you can't find \$90,000?

Will you not provide Families for a Secure Future with the financing they need to find alternative private funding?

**Hon. Madeleine Meilleur:** We have consulted with the families and we have listened to the families. What the families want is the passport money. This is our priority. This was initiated two years ago. There is the passport money.

I'm always very surprised that this question comes from a party that cut social services by 22.7% and that also wants to reduce the budget by \$3 billion. What are they going to cut besides schools, social services and hospitals? This government has invested half a billion dollars and will continue to invest. Our priority is to create beds, and for the passport program.

#### MANUFACTURING JOBS

**Mr. Paul Miller:** My question is to the Deputy Premier. This government is quick to announce new jobs or reactivated jobs—a few hundred here, a few hundred there; especially in one city, Oakville—but never to talk about the hundreds of thousands of lost jobs. The most recent casualty is Closetmaid Corp., which has announced plans to close its Cambridge plant, sending 500 more workers to the unemployment line, along with 1,000 workers in Hamilton and Burlington for Ancam.

Why is this McGuinty government allowing the Waterloo region to continue its slide into recession as workers see their wages decrease, their cost of living increase and their pensions disappear?

**Hon. George Smitherman:** I do want to remind the honourable member that in the first three months of this year—in January, February and March—there were 57,000 additional jobs.

We all recognize that there are sectors in the Ontario economy which are experiencing particular hardships, and some regions alongside that. That's why in our recent budget, as a government, we've been prepared to commit to working with the people of the province of Ontario to build up their skills, which is essential to making sure that Ontario has good economic prospects as



we go forward, alongside substantial investments in infrastructure.

Our five-point plan cuts business taxes, invests in infrastructure, supports innovation, partners with business and invests in the skills of our people. We think that that's always been the strength of Ontario, the quality of our people.

Accordingly, that's why you can see why investing in education, in retraining and in post-secondary education stand as such crucial priorities. The people in this province know that the government is prepared to work alongside them and invest alongside them to make sure our economy is strong going forward.

**Mr. Paul Miller:** To the Deputy Premier, 57,000 low-paying jobs in the service industry. Over the past three years, more than 6,000 well-paying manufacturing jobs have been lost in the Kitchener-Waterloo-Cambridge area. This government can take action to help the workers. How? Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Quebec all have highly successful refundable manufacturing investment tax credits. Ontario does not.

How many more workers have to lose their jobs in the Waterloo region and Hamilton before this government implements a refundable manufacturing investment tax credit?

**Hon. George Smitherman:** Firstly, on the issue of refundable, it was disappointing to watch the New Democratic Party vote against the flow of \$190 million in tax rebates, taxes paid back to the manufacturing sector in the province of Ontario. That's cash in hand to support people at a time that they badly need it.

With respect to his characterization of the jobs, the member is wrong: 55,000, or 97%, were in the private sector; 29,000 in construction. This is just one example of jobs that certainly don't classify as low wage.

To the point, we've had a very, very good investment this week from a highly regarded German manufacturer in Waterloo region that announced that it has selected that region, known for 20 years as Canada's technology triangle, for a new North American manufacturing facility.

We recognize that there are challenges in the economy. That's why our budget invested in our people, in the skills of our people and in the infrastructure of our province, so that we can make sure that, going forward, we have a strong economy that provides—

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Thank you. New question.

## VICTIMS OF CRIME

**Ms. Leeanna Pendergast:** My question is for the Attorney General. This is National Victims of Crime Awareness Week. During this time, we recognize the commitment of thousands of professionals and volunteers who offer victims of crime helping hands, compassionate hearts and much-needed guidance and advice.

In the immediate aftermath of a violent incident, victims are often in shock and very vulnerable. Can the

Attorney General please tell the House what this government is doing to ensure that victims of crimes and their families receive the supports and services they need to overcome trauma and to begin to rebuild their lives?

**Hon. Christopher Bentley:** I'd like to thank the member from Kitchener-Conestoga for her lifetime advocacy for victims of violence and her work as parliamentary assistant to the minister responsible for women's issues.

We can touch on two points. We've been building, for four and a half years now, better support systems for victims of violence, in particular, domestic violence. Victim Crisis Assistance and Referral Services connect with victims in 50 judicial districts across this province. They provide them with access to counselling and other services to support them as they move through the immediate aftermath of a horrible incident.

A program that was started last year—the victim quick response program—is receiving a 150% increase this year, to almost \$6 million. That provides payment for services such as counselling, access to housing, access to living expenses and, in the most horrible cases, funeral expenses.

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Supplementary. The member from York South-Weston.

**Mrs. Laura Albanese:** My question is also for the Attorney General.

We know that victims of domestic violence are overwhelmingly women and children. We also know that women suffering from domestic abuse face a number of challenges when seeking relief. While services have improved in the last few years, we all want to ensure that we continue to find ways to assist women at this most critical time.

I know that in my riding of York South-Weston, in the northwest part of Toronto, the Woman Abuse Council of Toronto operates a satellite office that works to help women in need get the support they require. Agencies working with women escaping abuse often do so quietly and without fanfare, even though their work is so crucial.

Can the Attorney General tell this House what this government is doing to ensure that women have access to assistance from the moment they report their abuse?

**Hon. Christopher Bentley:** This is a very important point because studies will show that when women receive access within 24 hours of an act of abuse, they are much more confident, much more able to access the type of supportive services that exist.

That's why this morning, with my colleagues the minister responsible for women's issues and her parliamentary assistant, the member from Kitchener-Conestoga, we announced a \$1.7-million increase to the victim/witness assistance program so we can provide women with access within 24 hours to that type of assistance.

This announcement was accompanied by several others. The PAR program—partner assault response program—which not only provides the abuser with counselling but the victim with support to get to a more pro-



tected, safer place: We increased the funding by 20%. The supervised access program for children: We doubled the funding for that.

It's part of our network of services to make sure that victims of domestic abuse have the assistance—

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Thank you. New question.

### LANGUAGE TRAINING

**Mr. Peter Shurman:** To the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration: How inclusive are we in Ontario when 30,000 new Ontarians literally have the welcome mat ripped out from under them?

Adult learners are waiting on pins and needles to find out which ministry wants to take responsibility for them and where or if they will be able to continue to upgrade their language skills. In my diverse riding of Thornhill, for example, we have hundreds, even thousands, of people who arrived years ago and are still virtual newcomers.

My question is, will you continue to allow 30,000 adult learners to fall through the cracks of your government's obvious neglect?

**Hon. Michael Chan:** Canada is a place of opportunity for newcomers. Every year, we have over 200,000 newcomers coming to Canada, and half of them, about 130,000, choose Ontario as their home. Helping newcomers is my ministry's service to them. We have bridge training for jobs, we have new settlement services for them, and, most important of all, we provide language training for them. And ESL training is one of the targeted services we have for newcomers. As a matter of fact, every year, we budget over \$50 million in adult non-credit training for newcomers, and, compared to last year, this year, we actually increased it by another 8%. This year, we will be funding a total of \$2,880 per ADE to newcomers—

1450

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Thank you. Supplementary.

**Mr. Peter Shurman:** In the McGuinty government, it is clear that the left hand doesn't really know what the right hand is doing. The trend that this government continues to follow is to throw money—and we just heard about it—at an issue, without foresight or planning, and then simply to walk away. That is not good enough for the 30,000 adult learners and their children who are caught in the middle of yet another procedural oversight of this administration.

My question to the minister is, why does this government continue to operate its ministries in virtual silos and hurt people who need services like these adult learners?

**Hon. Michael Chan:** In 2003, we had schools in chaos, hospital closings and roads and bridges in ruins. Since 2003, we've had a 22% increase in adult non-credit training for newcomers. As I mentioned before, we're at 8%, compared to last year, and now the total is \$2,880 per ADE.

Our government is committed to helping newcomers—helping them to engage in employment; helping them to bridge their training; helping them to find a job; and, most importantly, helping them in their education with English and French so that they can prosper in this province.

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Thank you. That ends the time for question period.

Just a gentle reminder to members that their expense reports for election expenses are due. Make sure that you have those completed if you want to enjoy your seats.

Petitions?

### PETITIONS

#### HOLODOMOR

**Mr. Dave Levac:** I have literally thousands of names on a petition, on behalf of the League of Ukrainian Canadians, the League of Ukrainian Canadian Women, the Ukrainian Canadian Congress, and Ukrainian-Canadian communities across Ontario, including many non-Ukrainians:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas as many as over 10 million Ukrainians perished from 1932 to 1933 as victims of the man-made famine in Ukraine named Holodomor; and

"Whereas the government of Ukraine, the United States House of Representatives, the United States Senate, the Senate of Canada, UNESCO, the United Nations, and over 40 other jurisdictions around the world have officially condemned Holodomor; and

"Whereas Ukrainian communities worldwide will commemorate Holodomor Memorial Day on the fourth Saturday in November of this year, which will fall on Saturday, November 22, 2008;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"We call on the government of Ontario:

"(1) to recognize the man-made famine in Ukraine of 1932 to 1933, named Holodomor; and

"(2) to extend its respect to Ukrainian-Canadians as they commemorate Holodomor Memorial Day on the fourth Saturday in November of this year; and

"(3) to request unanimous support of the passing of a private member's bill, the Holodomor Memorial Day Act, in the Legislature of Ontario that may establish the fourth Saturday in November in every year as Holodomor Memorial Day in Ontario; and"—

*Interjection.*

**Mr. Dave Levac:** To listen to the heckling in petition time is rather interesting, Speaker, to say the least.

"(4) to accept the signed statements, bearing over 3,300 signatures in support of the passing of the private member's bill, the Holodomor Memorial Day Act, in the Legislature of Ontario."

I respectfully sign my name to the petition in respect of the Ukrainians who are here today.

LORD’S PRAYER

**Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette:** “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the current Liberal government is proposing to eliminate the Lord’s Prayer from its place at the beginning of daily proceedings in the Legislature; and

“Whereas the recitation of the Lord’s Prayer has been an integral part of our spiritual and parliamentary tradition since it was first established in 1793 under Lieutenant Governor John Graves Simcoe; and

“Whereas the Lord’s Prayer’s message is one of forgiveness, of providing for those in need of their ‘daily bread’ and of preserving us from the evils that we may fall into; it is a valuable guide and lesson for a chamber that is too often an arena for conflict; and

“Whereas recognizing the diversity of the people of Ontario should be an inclusive process, not one which excludes traditions such as the Lord’s Prayer;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, respectfully petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to preserve the daily recitation of the Lord’s Prayer by the Speaker in the Legislature.”

I affix my name in full support.

DISABLED PERSONS  
PARKING PERMIT PROGRAM

**Mr. Michael A. Brown:** “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas there currently exist problems of exposure to theft and the weather when displaying a disabled person parking permit on a motorcycle while parked in a disabled parking space;

“We, the undersigned, petition our members of Parliament to promote the development of a special, fixed permit as proposed by the Bikers Rights Organization, for use by disabled persons who ride or are passengers on motorcycles, even if that requires an amendment to the Highway Traffic Act.”

This is signed by Ontarians all across the province, and I’m pleased to affix my signature. Again, I thank Michael Warren for his hard work on this particular petition.

LORD’S PRAYER

**Mr. Ted Chudleigh:** “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the current Liberal government is proposing to eliminate the Lord’s Prayer from its place at the beginning of the daily proceedings in the Ontario Legislature; and

“Whereas the recitation of the Lord’s Prayer has opened the Legislature every day since the 19th century; and

“Whereas the Lord’s Prayer’s message of forgiveness and the avoidance of evil is universal to the human condition: It is a valuable guide and lesson for a chamber that is too often an arena of conflict; and

“Whereas recognizing the diversity of the people of Ontario should be an inclusive process, not one which excludes traditions such as the Lord’s Prayer;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, ask the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to preserve the daily recitation of the Lord’s Prayer by the Speaker in the Legislature.”  
Prakash is here to receive my petition.

ANTI-SMOKING LEGISLATION

**Mr. Jeff Leal:** I have five petitions today to support Bill 11—children’s smoke-free cars.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas children exposed to second-hand smoke are at a higher risk for respiratory illnesses including asthma, bronchitis and pneumonia, as well as sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS) and increased incidences of cancer and heart disease in adulthood; and

“Whereas the Ontario Medical Association supports a ban on smoking in vehicles when children are present, as they have concluded that levels of second-hand smoke can be 23 times more concentrated in a vehicle than in a house because circulation is restricted within a small space; and

“Whereas the Ipsos Reid poll conducted on behalf of the Ontario Tobacco-Free Network indicates that eight in 10 (80%) of Ontarians support ‘legislation that would ban smoking in cars and other private vehicles where a child or adolescent under 16 years of age is present’; and

“Whereas Nova Scotia, California, Puerto Rico, and South Australia recently joined several jurisdictions of the United States of America in banning smoking in vehicles carrying children;

“We, the undersigned, respectfully petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to approve Bill 11 and amend the Smoke-Free Ontario Act to ban smoking in vehicles carrying children 16 years of age and under.”

I agree with this petition and will affix my signature to it.

LORD’S PRAYER

**Ms. Laurie Scott:** “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the current Liberal government is proposing to eliminate the Lord’s Prayer from its place at the beginning of daily proceedings in the Ontario Legislature; and

“Whereas the recitation of the Lord’s Prayer has opened the Legislature every day since the 19th century; and



"Whereas the Lord's Prayer's message is one of forgiveness, of providing for those in need of their 'daily bread' and of preserving us from the evils that we may fall into; it is a valuable guide and lesson for a chamber that is too often an arena for conflict; and

"Whereas recognizing the diversity of the people of Ontario should be an inclusive process, not one which excludes traditions such as the Lord's Prayer;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, ask the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to preserve the daily recitation of the Lord's Prayer by the Speaker in the Legislature."

It's signed by many people from the Haliburton area of my riding. I'll hand it to page Jordynne.

1500

### HOSPITAL FUNDING

**Mr. Charles Sousa:** "Petition to the Ontario Legislative Assembly:

"Western Mississauga ambulatory surgery centre:

"Whereas wait times for access to surgical procedures in the western GTA area served by the Mississauga Halton LHIN are growing despite the vigorous capital project activity at the hospitals within the Mississauga Halton LHIN boundaries; and

"Whereas 'day surgery' procedures could be performed in an off-site facility, thus greatly increasing the ability of surgeons to perform more procedures, alleviating wait times for patients, and freeing up operating theatre space in hospitals for more complex procedures that may require post-operative intensive care unit support and a longer length of stay in hospital;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care allocate funds in its 2008-09 capital budget to begin planning and construction of an ambulatory surgery centre located in western Mississauga to serve the Mississauga-Halton area and enable greater access to 'day surgery' procedures that comprise about four fifths of all surgical procedures performed."

I affix my signature, and provide it to Georgia for delivery.

### GO TRANSIT

**Mr. Ted Chudleigh:** "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas GO Transit:

"—has been plagued with frequent service disruptions, often leading to trip cancellations and stranding passengers at GO stations;

"—has consistently shown poor on-time performance, which declines each year;

"—has blamed many of the disruptions on long-delayed construction projects it has recently undertaken;...

"—fails to provide accurate information when major delays occur;

"—shows little regard for passengers' schedules or concerns; and

"—just approved a fare hike effective March 15, 2008, in spite of consistently poor performance and customer service;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"—to require GO Transit to provide a rebate on fares paid when GO Transit equipment failure, late arrival of equipment, staff shortage or rail congestion results in a cancellation of trains or a delay of more than 20 minutes to final destination;

"—better and more timely notification of transit cancellations, modifications and delays; and

"—More cars added to trains to ease the overcrowding, which causes safety concerns."

This petition has 11,336 online names, although my page contains somewhat fewer than that.

### HOSPITAL FUNDING

**Mr. Bob Delaney:** I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, presented to me by a number of people from, among other places, Mississauga, Erin and throughout Halton region, which reads as follows:

"Petition to the Ontario Legislative Assembly:

"Western Mississauga ambulatory surgery centre:

"Whereas wait times for access to surgical procedures in the western GTA area served by the Mississauga Halton LHIN are growing despite the vigorous capital project activity at the hospitals within the Mississauga Halton LHIN boundaries; and

"Whereas 'day surgery' procedures could be performed in an off-site facility, thus greatly increasing the ability of surgeons to perform more procedures, alleviating wait times for patients, and freeing up operating theatre space in hospitals for more complex procedures that may require post-operative intensive care unit support and a longer length of stay in hospital;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care allocate funds in its 2008-09 capital budget to begin planning and construction of an ambulatory surgery centre located in western Mississauga to serve the Mississauga-Halton area and enable greater access to 'day surgery' procedures that comprise about four fifths of all surgical procedures performed."

I'm pleased to sign and support this petition, and to ask page Adam to carry it for me.

### ANTI-SMOKING LEGISLATION

**Ms. Laurie Scott:** "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas children exposed to second-hand smoke are at a higher risk for respiratory illnesses including asthma,

bronchitis and pneumonia, as well as sudden infant death syndrome ... and increased incidences of cancer and heart disease in adulthood; and

"Whereas the Ontario Medical Association supports a ban on smoking in vehicles when children are present, as they have concluded that levels of second-hand smoke can be 23 times more concentrated in a vehicle than in a house because circulation is restricted within a small space; and

"Whereas the Ipsos Reid poll conducted on behalf of the Ontario Tobacco-Free Network indicates that eight in 10 (80%) of Ontarians support 'legislation that would ban smoking in cars and other private vehicles where a child or adolescent under 16 years of age is present'; and

"Whereas Nova Scotia, California, Puerto Rico, and South Australia recently joined several jurisdictions of the United States of America in banning smoking in vehicles carrying children;

"We, the undersigned, respectfully petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to approve Bill 11 and amend the Smoke-Free Ontario Act to ban smoking in vehicles carrying children 16 years of age and under."

This was brought to me by several students from I. E. Weldon Secondary School, and I appreciate their support in this matter.

#### ANTI-SMOKING LEGISLATION

**Mr. Jeff Leal:** I have another petition that's just arrived:

"Children and smoke-free cars—Support Bill 11.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas children exposed to second-hand smoke are at a higher risk for respiratory illnesses including asthma, bronchitis and pneumonia, as well as sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS) and increased incidences of cancer and heart disease in adulthood; and

"Whereas the Ontario Medical Association supports a ban on smoking in vehicles when children are present, as they have concluded that levels of second-hand smoke can be 23 times more concentrated in a vehicle than in a house because circulation is restricted within a small space; and

"Whereas the Ipsos Reid poll conducted on behalf of the Ontario Tobacco-Free Network indicates that eight in 10 (80%) of Ontarians support 'legislation that would ban smoking in cars and other private vehicles where a child or adolescent under 16 years of age is present'; and

"Whereas Nova Scotia, California, Puerto Rico, and South Australia recently joined several other jurisdictions of the United States of America in banning smoking in vehicles carrying children;

"We, the undersigned, respectfully petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to approve Bill 11 and amend the Smoke-Free Ontario Act to ban smoking in vehicles carrying children 16 years of age and under."

I'll affix my signature to this petition.

#### POPE JOHN PAUL II

**Mrs. Joyce Savoline:** I have a petition to the Parliament of Ontario. I'll read the penultimate paragraph:

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario to grant speedy passage into law of the private member's bill by Oak Ridges MPP Frank Klees entitled An Act to proclaim Pope John Paul II Day."

I agree with this petition. I affix my name thereto and give it to page Victoria.

#### FIREARMS CONTROL

**Mr. Bob Delaney:** I guess I have the last petition of the week.

This is a petition to the Ontario Legislative Assembly. It's been sent by several dozen people, largely from the city of Toronto. It reads as follows:

"Whereas innocent people are being victimized by the growing number of unlawful firearms in our communities; and

"Whereas only police officers, military personnel and lawfully licensed persons are the only people allowed to possess firearms; and

"Whereas a growing number of unlawful firearms are transported, smuggled and found in motor vehicles; and

"Whereas impounding motor vehicles and suspending driver's licences of persons possessing unlawful firearms in motor vehicles would aid the police in their efforts to make our streets safer;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to pass Bill 56, the Unlawful Firearms in Vehicles Act, 2008, into law, so that we can reduce the number of crimes involving firearms in our communities."

Anything that gets guns off the streets is worth signing. I'm pleased to sign this petition and to ask page Ida to carry it for me.

#### BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

**Hon. David Caplan:** On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I'd like to rise, pursuant to standing order 55, and give the House business for next week.

On Monday, April 21, in the afternoon, it will be government notice of motion number 59, related to standing order changes.

On Tuesday, April 22, in the afternoon: also government notice of motion number 59; in the evening, a motion related to Bill 35, the Investing in Ontario Act.

On Wednesday, April 23: also notice of motion number 59; in the evening, Bill 16, third reading, day one, of the sex offender act.

On Thursday, April 24: in the afternoon, Bill 48, the Payday Loans Act, first day of second reading.



## ORDERS OF THE DAY

### HIGHWAY TRAFFIC AMENDMENT ACT (SPEED-LIMITING SYSTEMS), 2008

#### LOI DE 2008 MODIFIANT LE CODE DE LA ROUTE (SYSTÈMES LIMITEURS DE VITESSE)

Resuming the debate adjourned on April 15, 2008, on the motion for second reading of Bill 41, An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act in relation to the use of speed-limiting systems in commercial motor vehicles / *Projet de loi 41, Loi modifiant le Code de la route relativement à l'utilisation de systèmes limiteurs de vitesse dans les véhicules utilitaires.*

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson):** The honourable member for Ottawa Centre.

**Mr. Yasir Naqvi:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for giving me the opportunity to speak on Bill 41, An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act in relation to the use of speed-limiting systems in commercial motor vehicles, legislation which I think we colloquially refer to as the speed-limiting bill.

This is one of those bills that I call a win-win bill, where you're trying to achieve two purposes, two objects, in one particular bill—a two-in-one deal, as I would say. On the one hand, we're ensuring road safety, we're ensuring that our roads are safe from trucks which might speed and endanger other people's lives, but on the other hand, we're also reducing our environmental footprint. We're ensuring that we're reducing the impact of greenhouse gas emissions within our environment and doing our part in Ontario to ensure that our environment is a clean one. This is the kind of legislation that we need to work on more and more in the future, where we are trying to achieve a particular purpose, but if we can also reduce our environmental footprint along with it, we are in a win-win situation.

During the debate, I will take some time to speak to both those impacts: The impact in relation to road safety and also the impact in relation to greenhouse gas emissions. Of course, I will be remiss if I do not discuss the wishes and desires of my constituency, those who live in my community of Ottawa Centre, in terms of what they would like to see in reducing the speed limits on trucks, on large commercial motor vehicles, and in decreasing our environmental footprint, trying to ensure that we tackle the issue in relation to climate change.

Let me talk about the first key benefit of this piece of legislation, and that is road safety, something I think we've all experienced, all of us who drive. We're blessed to live in a large province that is connected throughout by major highways. Given that we live in a fairly globalized economy, we travel and drive often and we have families who live all around. My parents, for example, live in

Oakville, and I get the opportunity to drive from Ottawa to Oakville all the time.

We're faced with this dilemma of being on highways and being stuck between speeding trucks, large trucks. You're caught in that dilemma of respecting the trucks—because they're mammoth and you're in a small car—but also ensuring that you're safe and your families are safe. That problem obviously gets compounded in winter months, when there's snow, slush, freezing rain and whatnot.

This particular legislation, if passed, will require large trucks to have a maximum speed capped at 105 kilometres per hour. That is a key element in ensuring safety on our roads; that is, ensuring that trucks do not speed, that they do not try to pass each other at excessive speeds of 120 or 125 kilometres per hour; that they actually follow; they cannot exceed 105 kilometres per hour.

The research shows that excessive speed is a factor in 23% of crashes, not to mention that 100 million fewer litres of diesel fuel are used by the trucking industry because of the speed which is undertaken. I was looking at the Ontario traffic survey data, which showed that between 30% and 60% of large trucks travelling on 400-series highways are speeding in excess of 105 kilometres an hour, and 15% of trucks are exceeding 110 kilometres per hour. Studies further show that casualties would be reduced by 7% for every one-kilometre-per-hour reduction in average vehicle speed. That is a significant impact which is being achieved through this legislation.

In my riding of Ottawa Centre, Highway 417 passes right through the heart of my riding, right in the middle, and given that it's a 400-series highway, we have trucks passing through. Of course, highways are used by families, members of the community who are travelling from one part of the city to another, and folks within my own riding take the highway to quickly get to the other part of the riding.

I was looking at some statistics from Ottawa, and the estimated average daily traffic on Highway 416 was approximately 20,000 in 2007, of which approximately 10% is truck traffic. In one week in 2007, Highway 417 received, on average, 127,554 vehicles, and 6% of that was truck traffic. That's a large number, especially if you think of it in the context of a downtown community. You've got big trailers running through the heart of Ottawa Centre. This is a significant number, and limiting their speed to 105 kilometres per hour by law through speed-limiting devices is a good initiative that will protect lives and ensure there's safety on the highways. Given that this is a downtown community, a lot of times, in my riding of Ottawa Centre, homes are built right along the highway, separated by just simple noise barriers. This is the type of legislation that really ensures we do not suffer some sort of major calamity because of a traffic accident.

Let me go to the second beneficial aspect of this legislation; that is, the impact on the environment. We know that studies show that by reducing speed, we are reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 280,000 tonnes. That's the



equivalent of taking 2,700 tractor-trailers off the road each year. That's a significant impact.

I was very interested to note that one third of greenhouse gas emissions in Ontario are from the transportation sector, and 84% of that is from road transportation. We are making a significant impact on reducing greenhouse gas emissions through limiting the speed of trucks.

Once again, I come back to my community of Ottawa Centre, which is right in the middle of the city, and the highway passes through it. We want to ensure that we reduce noise and air pollution caused by truck traffic on Highway 417, and this kind of legislation will ensure that.

One of the things I always like to do, and a habit I'm trying to get into when I'm looking at a piece of legislation, is to look at how other jurisdictions are treating the same type of legislation. I noticed that Ontario is going to be a leader in North America if this bill is passed. Although Quebec has speed-limiter legislation, they have yet to enact it. They're waiting for a Transport Canada study dealing with the safety impact of speed-limiting devices. Alberta has no legislation on speed limiters, Newfoundland has nothing and British Columbia is studying it. Similarly, as I understand it, there is no such legislation in the United States. Clearly, Ontario is taking a positive step forward to ensure road safety and beneficial environmental impacts through the passage of this legislation. In the European Union, we've seen that such legislation exists, and in the United Kingdom in certain instances, and Australia as well. I'm very happy and very pleased to see that we are taking a positive step and that all members of this Legislature are supporting this legislation.

The other good thing, given that we're dealing with commercial trucks, is that we need to ensure we are working with the business community. We need to ensure we're working with the trucking industry on this matter, that we are partnering and they are on board with this particular legislation. I'm happy to note that both the Ontario Trucking Association and the American Trucking Association are in favour of this particular piece of legislation, along with the Ontario Provincial Police, Pollution Probe, the Ontario Safety League, the Insurance Bureau of Canada—the list goes on and on. I think it is a significant part of this legislation that we've got the business community on board, that they recognize the necessity to enhance road safety and also help our environment and ensure we reduce the impact of greenhouse gas emissions.

I talked about Ottawa Centre, and I want to address that issue a little bit more because it is important. Highway 417—the Queensway, as we call it—is very much part and parcel of my riding. It sort of divides it right in the middle, and we notice this constant traffic. There's a lot of work which is going on in Ottawa, with the cross-border traffic from Quebec. We see a lot of truck traffic coming into Ontario which sort of rips through the middle of the city and then gets on the Queensway, and when it goes westward, it takes High-

way 417. This legislation will be a welcome sign for the people who live in Ottawa Centre who are right in the middle, next to a highway, because they will see a reduction in their greenhouse gas emissions. They will see that we are taking a positive direction towards pollution control and also promoting safety on the roads.

1520

In conclusion, I want to say that this is, like I said earlier, a win-win piece of legislation, a two-in-one deal. We're trying to accomplish two things with one piece of legislation. We're ensuring that our lives and the lives of our families and children are protected when they're on the highways. As we are going, during holidays, meeting our families, we are ensuring that we arrive home safely. Also, we're taking that active step in protecting our environment. I really encourage all the members of this Legislative Assembly to vote in favour of this particular bill.

In addition, we should look into ways in the future to create more bills like this where we can achieve a public policy objective and also have an impact on the environment, because we owe it to our future generations.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson):** Questions and comments?

**Mr. Ernie Hardeman:** I do want to commend the member from Ottawa Centre for the rendition of the bill. As I was intently listening to the presentation, there was one thing that caught my attention. It was the actual speed limit that he inferred, at least, or said was in the bill, and that speed limit would in fact solve a lot of our problems on the road. But as I read the bill, I see actually no numbers in the bill at all.

**Ms. Laurie Scott:** It was in my bill.

**Mr. Ernie Hardeman:** Exactly. That may bring it out. My colleague from Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock had this bill before, and she actually had the number in the bill, which people appreciated. During the debate, I know there were some people who supported the bill who said, "The number is a little too low; we should have it at 110," and there were some who said, "No, the speed limit is 100; it should be set at 100."

Maybe the member from Ottawa Centre actually read the other bill. It was, of course, the better of the two bills, and maybe that's the one he was speaking to. His suggestion that the number is in the bill is going to somewhat come as a surprise to the people who wanted to debate last time what that number should be, because this number is going to be determined behind closed doors by the Minister of Transportation, as they see fit, again taking away the total democracy of it.

The people can't be involved in the legislation, and this is such a good piece of legislation. It would have been a very good opportunity for the government to come forward and say, "Let the people decide. Let the people help us come up with the right number," rather than, "Pass the bill, take it into the office, sit there and make sure we put in the number that we want for the people we've been talking to, and don't worry about the rest of the public." I would hope that that would be an



amendment that would be introduced as we continue to debate on this bill.

**Mr. Michael A. Brown:** First, I want to commend my colleague from Ottawa Centre, who brings something very important to this Legislature. In a very short while, he has proven his knowledge and his capability of bringing good research to any kind of intervention he's made in here. I think we all appreciate that and will enjoy working with the member for Ottawa Centre for many years to come.

First, I want to say to the members of the Legislature that this is a bill essentially about the environment. It is essentially about reducing the amount of emissions, the amount of greenhouse gases that go into the environment; 280,000 tonnes of greenhouse gas emissions will be reduced simply by reducing the speed that our large trucks go. By reducing it to 105 kilometres in the 400 series, we will save 280,000 tonnes of greenhouse gases. I think that's extraordinarily significant.

I was going to remind members of what other people have said about this bill. I was just looking at the Manitoulin Recorder—the Manitoulin West Recorder, as it's now known. You would know, if you are a regular subscriber to the Manitoulin West Recorder, that it is located in Gore Bay on Manitoulin Island, which is the home of one of Canada's largest trucking concerns.

Doug Smith started Manitoulin Transport 35, 40 years ago with two trucks, and has built it into one of the 10 largest trucking firms in Canada. This company works across North America, and they're quoted in the Recorder as saying that they regulate the speed of their trucks at 90 kilometres per hour because it's good for safety, it's good for business and it's good for the environment.

**Ms. Laurie Scott:** It's a pleasure to join in the debate this afternoon and comment on the member from Ottawa Centre's commentary on Bill 41.

This bill was brought in a few weeks ago. It was quite familiar to me because it had been private member's legislation that I introduced a couple of years ago. I noticed in his comments that he said Ontario could be a leader in this.

I was just wondering: A couple of years ago you actually could have been the leader. It was brought forward to me by the Ontario Trucking Association, and we introduced it. We had debate. There were some members opposite who weren't in agreement, but I can see that—I think "the road to Damascus" was used yesterday—there's been a change, which I welcome. We're debating it here this afternoon but, again, it could have been done a couple of years ago. Unfortunately it wasn't.

The member from Manitoulin also mentioned, I think, the parliamentary assistant to transportation. We're glad he's joining us this afternoon in the debate. He brought up some good points. It's safety and it is environment that this bill deals with.

There's been widespread support by a lot of groups besides the Ontario Trucking Association: CAA, Pollution Probe, and the list goes on. There are many supporters.

He also brought up a point that the trucking company in his riding—I believe it was also brought up by the member from Ottawa Centre—that since 1995 these chips have been implanted in commercial truck vehicles, and that over 50% of the trucks operating in Ontario today already use this. I think the statistic in the States is that 74% use this.

It's nice when you see industry and the environmental groups that brought this forward a couple of years ago. It's taken a while, but hopefully we're here now. We need it to go to committee just to make sure we've got all the lumps and processes out of it.

I thank you for that opportunity today.

**Mr. Mike Colle:** I'm very glad to comment on the member from Ottawa Centre's speech. I think he makes a very critical point here.

We sometimes forget that some of the 400-series highways are major highways that are right in the middle of our cities. Those of us who've been to Ottawa understand that the 417 cuts right through the heart of the city. So this is critically important to the safety of the people who live in the city of Ottawa, with that highway right in the middle of it.

I would also say that in Toronto here we have the 427, and the 401 is now like a downtown road. You've got to start to make that road safer and take a look at how it interacts with road safety a lot more.

I would just like to talk also about private members' bills. I know the member from Kawartha Lakes—Brock there—sorry for the full name—

**Interjection:** Haliburton.

**Mr. Mike Colle:** —Haliburton—a beautiful part of the province—was talking about a private member's bill. I remember that I had a private member's bill. You were here, Mr. Speaker. It was on bringing about red light camera legislation in this province. I think it took me five years to get the previous government to finally adopt it.

I didn't bemoan the fact that it took me five years. I said, "Thank you for passing the legislation." They did. It was an innovative piece of legislation never before done in Canada, but the government of the time, after deliberation, thought it was worthwhile bringing forth.

That's how this Legislature works. If you've got a good idea, you hope you can get your private member's bill passed or get the government to adopt it, as the previous government adopted my red light camera legislation, as they adopted my Oak Ridges moraine legislation and as this present government adopted the traditional Chinese medicine legislation.

1530

It takes work, it takes explanation, because these pieces of legislation are complex. You have to get public buy-in, public awareness, and that's what this Legislature is for.

I think this bill here, with great input, is going to be much better. I think it'll make our roads safer and our air cleaner.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson):** The honourable member from Ottawa Centre has two minutes to respond.



**Mr. Yasir Naqvi:** First of all, I'd like to extend my thanks for the comments from the members from Oxford, Algoma-Manitoulin, Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock and Eglinton-Lawrence. Thank you very much for your comments. I do want to congratulate all the members who have contributed to the creation of this bill, which, if passed, will become law. So I think we all need to commend ourselves for the good work we're doing in this Legislature on behalf of the people of Ontario.

I share the point of view which was raised from the honourable member from Eglinton-Lawrence: that some 400-series highways are becoming like downtown roads. The same circumstance is in my city of Ottawa and my riding of Ottawa Centre, where Highway 417, the Queensway, is almost becoming a downtown corridor, a sort of local road. What we see is these trucks which pass through these roads at excessive speeds, which could jeopardize the safety and well-being of people.

I think the member from Oxford raised the issue of speed. I understand that the actual speed, the 105 km/hr I was talking about, will be set in the regulation. That way, I guess there's some flexibility in the future in terms of changing that particular speed.

I just want to reinforce the win-win element of this piece of legislation—the two-in-one deal, I call it. I think it's a good, positive trend for the future as we are developing legislation from both sides of the House, be it a government bill or private member's bill, where we try to achieve a public policy objective but also keep in mind the environmental impact, that aspect of the legislation. What we have done in this particular legislation is, we're enhancing road safety by controlling the speed of large commercial motor vehicles but also, at the same time, improving the environment by reducing the impact of greenhouse gas emissions. That is the type of policy, that's the kind of law we need to create in the province of Ontario and I'm very proud we're doing here today.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson):** I thank the honourable member for his contribution to the debate. Further debate?

**Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer:** I look forward to contributing to the debate on Bill 41, the Highway Traffic Amendment Act (Speed-limiting Systems), 2008. This bill is all about limiting speeds. For those people who don't know what a speed limiter is, it is a built-in electronic microchip that allows an engine's top speed to be preset. That's what we're talking about here. This would amend the Highway Traffic Act in relation to the use of speed-limiting systems, and it would apply not to cars but to commercial motor vehicles.

First of all, I want to congratulate my colleague the member from Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock, who first introduced a very similar bill in 2006. It was a private member's bill which she brought forward. I think what's most interesting about that bill—although there was obviously unanimous support from this side of the House, there were people on the other side of the House who voted against it.

I just want to list the names of those people who voted against this bill: Mr. Rinaldi, Ms. Mitchell, Mr.

McNeely, Mr. Parsons, Ms. Marsales, and—one name that I was quite shocked to see here was the fact that Mr. Smitherman also voted against this bill. I would have thought that a bill which talked about improving the environment would have been a bill that a health minister would have supported. So I was quite shocked to see that he and all the other people had voted against this legislation. I'm going to be interested in seeing how they vote on this bill when it comes for third and final reading.

Regrettably, my colleague Laurie Scott's bill was not debated any further. The governing party didn't see fit at that time and wasn't prepared to support it. So we have it coming forward now, and we are pleased to see this bill, although I would have to say to you that there are certain parts of the bill, some questions that definitely need to be answered. I also want to remind this House that our party has a very proud record when it comes to doing everything we can to make our roads safer. We've had a couple of outstanding transportation ministers: We've had Mr. Sterling and, most recently, we've had Mr. Klees. I think that we can be justly proud of the fact that in the province of Ontario we have done a great deal in making sure that we have safety legislation that has made the roads in Ontario among the safest in all of North America. I just want to congratulate both Mr. Sterling and Mr. Klees for the outstanding work that they did as ministers of transportation in ensuring safety on our roads.

I want to remind this House that not only did we bring in road safety legislation but we also brought in initiatives that were focused on driving and drinking. I can remember, again, these two colleagues being involved in those discussions, but I also believe that one of our colleagues who no longer is in this House, Margaret Marland, had a huge role in making sure that we took the steps that were necessary to protect people on our roads from drunk drivers. Today again, as a result of the initiatives that our government, the Conservative government, put forward prior to 2003, we can be very proud of the fact that we have among the strongest drinking and driving legislation in the entire country.

As I say, we have a proud past, and we want to make sure that as we move forward with this piece of legislation, which is obviously going to set the top speed for an engine, that we do it in such a way that, at the end of the day, is actually going to protect the public as well as focus on another couple of other areas.

Because this bill does have an impact on the public and obviously on people involved in the trucking industry, we feel very strongly that this bill should go to public hearings. With all of the questions that are left unanswered—because a lot of this is going to be decided by regulation, which means that the opposition will have no input, nor will the public or those that are going to be impacted—we believe it needs to be discussed. The safety issues related to this bill need to be given a full public hearing.

Unfortunately, the bill leaves many questions unanswered, and I think one of the questions was just referred to by my colleague, and that is the speed limit



that is going to be set. We heard one of the members of the government refer to a 95-kilometre speed limit. My colleague's bill had a 105-kilometre speed limit. Obviously, that's an issue that needs to be considered.

We also have to take into consideration that there are sometimes going to be some extenuating circumstances, such as your ability, when there is the need, to accelerate under certain conditions when you're driving on the road, in order to avoid a collision. One of the key issues is to take a look at the speed and determine what will be the most appropriate speed as far as taking into consideration the safety issue, which is very, very important.

In some respects, it's unfortunate that we have to bring a bill like this forward, because I think it does speak to the fact that we're not able to enforce the speed limits on our highways. We simply don't have enough police officers on our roads to enforce these limits and to issue the high penalties that are obviously necessary. I know that any time that you see the police patrolling the roads, it has an impact on how people drive, but they're simply not there often enough. We have to take a look at providing the appropriate resources in order that we can continue to make our highways as safe as possible.

1540

We also need to take a look at what we can do about drivers in this province who drive poorly, who are not well trained and are really a menace and a danger on the roads. I refer not just to those who are driving trucks; I really refer to those who are driving cars. I drive into this city almost daily from my home in Kitchener-Waterloo, and I'll tell you, each and every day as I come into this city and go home again, I see people who are driving in a most dangerous way. I think one of the biggest problems is people not signalling. I sometimes see trucks who—you know what? You just have to put on your brakes really fast because they're not signalling. Sometimes they're right in front of you and they're a lot bigger than you are, so you'd just better watch out. I think that's an issue that we need to address: the whole issue of people who aren't properly trained and really are very unsafe drivers.

The other issue is the whole issue of trucks in this province that need to be properly maintained. But if I'm going to talk about trucks and the need for them to be well maintained, I also want to talk about our highways. I don't know about anybody else, but I think I would get universal agreement—I don't think we've had a year like this year, where we have had more potholes. I can tell you, as someone who is, as I say, driving about 500 kilometres a day, that they are dangerous. I have seen hubcaps fly off and land in the middle of the traffic. Again, it's very, very dangerous. I hope that this government will devote the appropriate resources this summer to do the job of making sure that our roads are safe to drive, because I'm sure there already have been accidents that have been caused by people simply ending up in a pothole which they couldn't see, and it's unfortunately caused them to lose control of their vehicle. So I urge you to do that.

These are a few of the things that are all related to road safety. Of course, this bill is all about road safety and making our roads as safe as possible.

We know that if this bill were passed, and we've been informed by the Ontario Trucking Association, we could save fuel. Boy, do we need to save fuel. The price of fuel today was up to—I think \$1.174 is what I paid. I think it's the first time, that even though I wasn't on empty, I had the privilege of putting at least some \$70 on my Visa card. We've also heard that as a result of the increase in fuel, for truckers in this province to fill up, their price has gone from \$700 to \$1,000. Unfortunately, this is going to impact on the goods, the food and the services that we buy. Whatever we could do to save on fuel is pretty significant. This bill, which would limit speed, would certainly mean that we could save on fuel.

The other important benefit—and this is why I was so surprised that the Minister of Health didn't support my colleague Laurie Scott's bill—is that it would contribute to greenhouse gas reduction. I don't know anybody in this House who could have voted against a bill that would have had that type of effect on the reduction of greenhouse gases, except perhaps Mr. Smitherman. So it was really quite shocking that he wasn't more concerned, because of course this is something that causes problems with people's health and safety.

The other benefit of this bill would be a reduction in the risk of severe crashes. We know that there is a correlation between speed and the risk and severity of crashes. It's extremely important that we take that into consideration.

I just want to go back. I talked before about the fact that there's so much in the regulations, and so I guess there's an amount of secrecy again, which we're seeing in a lot of the legislation that's coming forward, where the public doesn't have all the facts.

One of the biggest facts they don't have right now is what the stated speed will be. As I said before, that is definitely a question that should be debated in committee. But I would hope that the government provides an answer, so that everybody knows, when they vote on this bill, what the speed limit is actually going to be. As I said before, my colleague Laurie Scott wasn't secretive at all. She recommended 105, and that had been recommended by the trucking association.

The other thing we don't know yet—the government has hinted that the new rules will take effect in the fall of 2009, and they've said there may be a period of soft enforcement prior to that, so I guess that means you get a warning and no ticket. But it's going to be important that we educate people, and again, we need to have a plan of implementation. A lot of the legislation that comes into this House is totally lacking as far as a plan of action and a plan of implementation, and in this case I think we need to have that answered as well.

The other thing is that they're leaving the definition of commercial vehicle to regulation. So I guess there's some concern at the current time as to what vehicles are going to be impacted or not impacted by this bill.

**Mr. Ernie Hardeman:** Maybe cars.



**Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer:** My colleague just said, "Maybe cars."

We need to know. This is information that should be public knowledge. We should have all of that information, and this bill shouldn't be shrouded in the secrecy that it currently is.

**Interjection:** Or they don't know.

**Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer:** As another colleague has just suggested, perhaps, as in many cases, the government doesn't know.

For example, they've just announced and introduced a motion to change the standing orders. That's all well and dandy, but I can tell you that nobody, including the clerks at the table or Hansard or the people in this House, knows what the implications of that are going to be. We have a pretty good idea. We know that the question period in the morning is intended to avoid accountability and scrutiny, and certainly it's going to reduce the opportunity for this place to operate in a more democratic fashion.

But do you know what? The one thing they totally forgot was the impact those changes might have on committees in this House, which currently sit at times that have been allocated. Again, they've acknowledged that they don't know what impact it will have on committees, and yet they're planning to introduce these changes sometime in the spring session. The government needs to be identifying and letting the public know the answers to some of these questions, if indeed they do know.

The bill also doesn't indicate who is going to be held accountable for not following the act—a key question when you think of trucking. We have independent truckers, but we also have people who drive trucks as part of huge fleets; I have some of those fleets within my own riding and my own community. Is it going to be the driver or is it going to be the owner of the truck, the fleet owner, who is going to be held liable? We don't know that.

**Mr. Robert Bailey:** Who's going to pay?

**Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer:** One of my other colleagues just asked who is going to pay some of the extra costs that could be incurred by the changes that are going to have to take place.

I go back to what I said before. When you take a look at some of the huge increases in fuel and the impact they're having on the trucks that are delivering goods and services to stores and throughout the country, driving into the United States, and when you see the economy in decline—we just lost another 500 jobs in Cambridge, announced yesterday—we have to be aware of any additional costs that could be incurred. They need to be announced publicly and upfront. People need to know this.

1550

I guess the final question that I have—no, I have three more—will be: Are school buses exempt? I'll tell you right now that school buses are finding it difficult. They're not being appropriately reimbursed by the Ministry of Education. In fact, there's no money that is specifically identified to be going there. Money is spent

elsewhere, and they're having a hard time providing safe transportation. I'll tell you, they work as hard as they can to do that. So again, it would be an additional cost.

Will the allowable speeds be the same on 400-series highways as on rural highways? We know that currently there is a difference.

Again, there seems to be a discrepancy between the Ontario Trucking Association, which says it will reduce GHG emissions by 140,000 tonnes a year, and the government, which says it's going to be 280,000 tonnes. Who's correct? At the end of the day, what matters is that we do reduce emissions, but we need answers.

I was pleased to participate in this debate today. I again want to congratulate my colleagues, who have all done an outstanding job in bringing forward initiatives, legislation, measures related to improving safety on our roads. I would ask this government to ensure that there is appropriate advertising before the public hearings, that all people who have an interest in this legislation have an opportunity to appear.

I would hope that those questions I have raised would be answered. I would hope that they wouldn't leave it all to regulations. There's enough secrecy in this House currently. Just because you're a majority and you have more people, I think you need to be respectful of the fact that there are others who have a need to know. If they're going to be forced to make some of these changes, obviously there needs to be education; there needs to be an implementation plan. At a time when we have the economy suffering, I think it's most appropriate that the public know what faces them in the future.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson):** Questions and comments?

**Mr. Charles Sousa:** I appreciate the comments from my colleagues from Ottawa Centre as well as Kitchener-Waterloo. I stand with them in support of Bill 41. My reasons are clear: The introduction of speed-limiter legislation is expected to decrease the crash risk of trucks travelling over 105 kilometres an hour and also decrease the severity of those crashes when they occur. I should mention, however, that I've received a letter opposing the legislation, citing that recreational and reckless car drivers are also part of those truck-related fatalities, which is all the more reason to encourage defensive measures and safer roads.

Studies show that casualties would be reduced by 7% for every one-kilometre reduction in average vehicle speed. Both the Ontario Trucking Association and the American Trucking Association state that a large portion of their members already voluntarily use speed limiters. This is essential to ensure that business and industry are not negatively impacted. As such, it is important that we continue to work with our industry stakeholders and counterparts across Canada as we implement this program.

Also, there will be, and needs to be, extensive education with our stakeholders to inform operators from other jurisdictions, to ensure compliance with our legislation. Although Quebec has speed-limiter legislation in



place, neither it nor any American jurisdiction actually mandates the use of speed limiters. In comparison, the European Union, the United Kingdom and Australia each mandate the use of speed limiters. This is important because Ontario traffic data show that between 30% to 60% of large trucks travelling on our 400-series highways are speeding in excess of 105 kilometres.

As already eloquently expressed by others in this House, the potential benefits of this proposed legislation include: Tonnes of reductions in greenhouse gas emissions, to the equivalent of about 2,700 tractor-trailers off the road each year; increased road safety—research shows that excessive speed is a factor in 23% of crashes; and 100 million fewer litres of diesel fuel would be used by the trucking industry.

As such, I support, along with members from both sides of this House, the mandatory use of speed limiters legislation.

**Mr. Ernie Hardeman:** I want to commend the member from Kitchener–Waterloo and our opposition House leader for a job well done in pointing out the good part about the bill, and actually why the majority in this House—at least, I presume the vast majority of this House—in the end will be supporting in bill. But at the same time, I think it's very important to recognize that the bill as it presently stands is too far from right to be right. There are too many things in it that need to be changed, that need to have some amendments and clarification so that the public can be assured that what the government is saying in the lead-up to this bill is in fact what the bill is going to do.

The member from Kitchener–Waterloo talked somewhat about the bill that the member from—

**Ms. Laurie Scott:** Haliburton.

**Mr. Ernie Hardeman:** —Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes–Brock introduced last year in the last sitting of the House. It defined what it was going to do, and it was quite clear that if you implemented that bill, that would be the end result. But we've heard two folks from the government side speaking here, and one says the speed limit will be 95 and another one says it will be 105. The bill doesn't say what it is, but I want to tell you that there's a lot of difference between those numbers, both in the impact on our environment and on our roads and speed, and on the impact of the support by the public.

As we go through this debate, we keep hearing from the government side, and even from the opposition side, that this legislation is supported by the trucking industry—the trucking association—and that's true. But I believe their support is based on that number being 105. As we go forward with this bill, if that's not the case, then one has to wonder whether their support would be maintained. I assure you that we should have public hearings that so those changes can be addressed.

**Mr. Michael A. Brown:** I want to commend the member for Kitchener–Waterloo on her fine intervention this afternoon and assure her that the number we're talking about is 105 kilometres per hour. It will be in regulation, and I think the reason for that is reasonably

obvious to most of us, knowing that if we wanted to change it to 104 or 106, we don't need to come back to this assembly to do that—if that does happen.

I want to read a quote from David Bradley, the president of the Ontario Trucking Association, whom we all know quite well in here. I think I've known Mr. Bradley for roughly 20 years. This is what Mr. Bradley says about this bill: "I think this is really a no-brainer, quite frankly. I don't see how anyone can stand up and say, 'We're in support of speeding trucks.'" That's what the Ontario Trucking Association says here. What it says to people is obvious: If we control the speed of trucks, not only do we have good environmental benefits in terms of saving 280,000 tonnes of greenhouse gas but saving 100 million litres of diesel fuel, and the advantage of making sure that our roads are safer. Not one of us who travels this province—and many of the members here have significant experience on the 400-series highways, including this one, and we know that the odd trucker—most truckers are excellent drivers. They're the best professional drivers on our roads, but there are always some who do not believe that they need to abide by the speed limits.

This is a good piece of legislation that will be safe for the people of Ontario driving on our 400-series highways.

**Mr. Frank Klees:** I want to congratulate my colleague the member for Kitchener–Waterloo on her comments relating to this legislation. She asked some very specific questions, and we are looking forward to hearing the responses to those. She also indicated very clearly our position as a caucus that in principle, of course, we support the intent of this legislation. We want to ensure that the legislation is implemented properly, as she rightfully said. All too often we have had legislation come forward from this government without an implementation plan, so we have the initial applause but then the stakeholders find that it's impossible to live with the details of the legislation. That's why we're calling for public hearings, so that stakeholders can come forward and raise their concerns to ensure that we have a proper implementation strategy.

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As I've said many times, effectively what this legislation means is that we are failing in this province. We're failing to enforce the speed limits that we have. We already have speed limiters. They're those signs on the highway and the law that says you can't do any more than 100 or 80 or whatever the speed limit is. So the fact is that this government is failing to properly resource our police services across the province so that they can enforce those speed limits. And when they do write the tickets, we have a court system that isn't properly resourced, so that the majority of tickets end up actually getting thrown out.

With regard to the enforcement here, what we're doing is overlaying another level of bureaucracy and cost, and I suggest to you that it all comes down to resourcing the legislation that we have. We'll see what the government does.



**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson):** The honourable member from Kitchener–Waterloo has up to two minutes to respond.

**Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer:** I want to thank very much the member from Mississauga South for his words of support; also my colleague the member from Oxford for his comments; and certainly I appreciated the clarification from the member for Algoma–Manitoulin, who indicates that he believes the speed is going to be 105 kilometres per hour; and of course the transportation critic for our party and former Minister of Transportation, the member for Newmarket–Aurora. Again, I think he has enunciated the policy and the position of our party. We do support this in principle. Obviously, we have questions, as do other people, that need to be addressed. But at the end of the day, we are glad that the government moved forward with this legislation because it should improve highway safety. It obviously can make a difference in reducing emissions in this province. Whatever we can do to make our roads safe is very important.

We look forward to the public hearings. We look forward to ensuring that everybody has an opportunity to put their concerns on the table. If we have the public hearings, I would encourage the government to not just merely pay lip service to the people who appear before it, but I hope that at the end of the day the amendments that are made will reflect the will of the people and also the concerns that have been expressed, because it's basically good legislation in principle but obviously there are some issues that need to be addressed, and we've heard about them already.

Thank you very much, everyone, for moving this bill forward.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson):** I thank the honourable member for her contribution to the debate.

Further debate? The honourable member from Welland.

**Mr. Peter Kormos:** Thank you kindly, Speaker. I'm afraid I'm a little more skeptical than some of my colleagues in this Legislature. The comment by Mr. Bradley that somehow if you don't support this bill you're advocating speeding is the sort of blackmail that's used all too often to put people in—

*Interjections.*

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson):** I'll just ask the honourable member if he wants to reconsider his comment.

**Mr. Peter Kormos:** Is that a request to withdraw or reconsider, sir?

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson):** Withdraw.

**Mr. Peter Kormos:** Withdraw.

Look, we know the tactic. If you don't support the legislation, somehow you support speeding trucks on our highways. We know the tactic—where was it used? In a federal election?—that if you supported a particular position then you were somehow an advocate of pornography. Do you remember that not-so-subtle point being made? “Oh, if you don't support the legislation,

you support drunkenness and general misconduct across the province or the nation.”

I'm not sure that this bill constitutes a solution, because I'm not sure that it adequately defines the problem. Let's understand that while the Ontario Trucking Association supports and advocates this legislation, others don't. The Teamsters don't support this legislation. You're talking about a huge number of truckers across Ontario, Canada and North America.

I know truckers. Like all of you, truckers live in my community. We represent them here in the Legislature. Truckers are my neighbours. Down where I live, down around Bald Street in Welland, there are more than a couple of owner-operators who park their rigs on the weekend—when they're fortunate enough to be home on a weekend—in front of their houses. Of course, from time to time, as you know, there's the occasional complaint in some neighbourhoods about how people shouldn't be parking those rigs, but in my neighbourhood we understand that that's the working tool of a hard-working woman or man.

Truckers are some of the hardest-working people in this country, in North America—incredibly hard-working people. As small owner-operators, as small entrepreneurs, as business people investing \$150,000 to \$200,000 in a truck, they're under incredible financial pressure to even pay for that truck, never mind generate a return on their investment.

The bill appeals to the growing phenomenon of a huge volume of truck traffic on our highways. I—like most drivers, I presume—find it a novel situation when I've got a big rig on one side, a big rig on the other side, one in front of me and one behind me—I'm in that canyon. But I've got to tell you this—and other members, to be fair, have acknowledged this as well—that professional truckers tend to be the safest drivers on our highways. They do it for a living. They drive hundreds of thousands of kilometres a year.

The New Democrat position on this bill is that it should go to committee. We've said that from the get-go. The real work around this bill isn't going to be the reading of Coles Notes issued by the ministry, by government backbenchers. The real issues are going to be addressed by the players themselves.

I speak to people like Jim Park. He's the editor of a trucking magazine called highwaySTAR magazine. He sent me a commentary from Joanne Ritchie, the executive director of the Owner-Operators Business Association of Canada. While Mr. Bradley does support the legislation, Joanne Ritchie and the Owner-Operators Business Association of Canada don't, just like the Teamsters, a large community of professional career truckers here in the province.

As I say, if you begin this debate by creating the premise that if you don't support the bill, you're in support of speeding trucks, it's a very unfortunate approach to developing public policy.

Some of the obvious observations are as follows: The normal rate of the flow of traffic on our 400-series



highways and the QEW—God bless that highway, because it takes me home every weekend. In my 1994 Chevy pickup, my little S-10, I put the automatic speed control, a governor of sorts, at 114 clicks. I want to stay just below the 15 over, but I find myself in the middle lane of the QEW, and on more than a few occasions in the right-hand lane, at 114 or 115 kilometres an hour. And it's not the trucks; it's just the overall flow of traffic.

One of the things that people will tell you, people who know about driving safely, is that you are a far more dangerous vehicle on that highway when you're impeding that flow of traffic and creating a roadblock, if you will.

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You'll recall that there was one gentleman here in the province of Ontario, who one presumes was miffed at the authorities, who was going to test the speed limit by travelling at exactly 100 kilometres an hour for a lengthy period of time along the 401 and found himself not only charged under the Highway Traffic Act, but convicted.

I find it passing strange when the government reconfirms and reconfirms that the speed limit is going to be 105 clicks. What it means is, you can't go faster. It doesn't mean you can go beyond 105 for a minute; it means that you can't go faster. It's called a governor. I'm concerned—because at various times of day, various points in the week, you've got a volume of trucks—when trucks, then, are forced to create a hazard for vehicles, who shouldn't but who nonetheless are going to be motivated or driven to pass them because they're perceived as blocking traffic, because they're only travelling at 105 kilometres an hour while the flow of traffic for domestic vehicles—for Chevys, Buicks, Oldsmobiles and that sort of thing—is 115, 120, 125. I mean, please.

I want to hear from truckers and the advocates of this legislation about how those truckers are going to accommodate those vehicles and avoid the dangerous phenomenon of people passing recklessly because they're frustrated and because the flow of traffic motivates them to do so. That isn't answered by the bill in and of itself, nor is it answered by the advocates for the bill. I want to hear how that woman or man driving that truck, who sees a hazard on the road and who may, based on all of their experience and based on good driving practice, has to speed up to avoid it or pass it, is going to overcome the 105-kilometre-an-hour limit should that circumstance require them to exceed 105, maybe 110, 115.

The stats that are employed are in and of themselves interesting. First of all, I've got to tell you simply anecdotally that I'm far more fearful of the trucker who's been working too long, driving too many hours, and drifts across the line, regardless of how fast they're going. You've been there, haven't you—been there, done that, honked the horn? You've seen the driver be alerted by it and then swing his truck back into the lane. I'm going to give the benefit of the doubt to that driver. I suspect that's a driver who has been working on a long haul, who's tired and who may, quite frankly, have driven a longer time in that given 24 hours than he or she

should be driving, based on regulations and controls on the number of hours.

You see, the real issue—and this has been stated already, too—is dangerous driving. The only way, at the end of the day, that you address dangerous driving is by having OPP officers on our 400-series highways in sufficient numbers to identify dangerous drivers and deal with them in an appropriate way. Quite frankly, the truck travelling at 95 kilometres an hour that's weaving back and forth, in and out of their lane, is far more dangerous than the truck with a wide-awake, alert driver doing 115 clicks when he or she is keeping up with the speed of traffic.

The Ministry of Transportation has data. There has been this whole myth around speed as a causal factor, as compared to speed as an aggravating factor, in terms of the severity of the damage. The Ministry of Transportation has data, and that's when the government was contemplating roads with limits of 110, 115, even 120 kilometres an hour. Our newest highways are engineered and designed for vehicles in proper mechanical condition with alert, properly trained drivers to travel those roads at 110, 115, 120. Is it by accident that 115 is the magic number for police officers who are stopped there with the radar gun, shooting radar at people driving past them? No, it's not an accident at all. You've got boundaries, and then you've got the reasonable area on both sides of that boundary.

I want to understand why 115 kilometres an hour is going to be the norm for thousands upon thousands of cars driven by drivers ranging from poorly trained to highly skilled, from little experience to high levels of experience, when truckers are going to be mechanically limited to 105. Do you want to give effect to a 105 rule? Then have zero tolerance in terms of speeding on our highways. That will allow that trucker to speed up to pass somebody, because no police officer is going to charge anybody—well, I shouldn't say that, because folks will be calling in saying, "I got charged merely for passing," but it's a rare occasion.

I don't understand the government members. They're so absolute about this; they're so sure. Everybody is wrong but them—pretty typical, huh? The Teamsters are wrong, the independent owner/operators are wrong, Joanne Ritchie is wrong, Jim Park is wrong. There may be a few people here who have driven rigs from here to Los Angeles, and I expect them to participate in the debate, but I don't think there's a whole lot of them. I can't think of any more demanding profession.

If you want to talk about impact on our economy, let's understand, and I'm not pleased with the fact, that the St. Lawrence Seaway, for instance, has traffic volumes that have dropped dramatically, that the federal government has allowed our rail systems to virtually disappear. Railbed is rotting while highways become busier and busier. It's part of the just-in-time phenomenon and the need for materials to be delivered in small or fixed quantities by a particular date.



The other gun to the head, if you will, is the environmental issue: the fraud of—was it Ronald Reagan?—the 55-mile-an-hour speed limit.

**Interjection:** Carter.

**Mr. Peter Kormos:** Well, Carter and then Reagan. The Carter-Reagan fraud of 55 miles an hour was part and parcel of an American policy designed to justify, in my view, international policy, creating a myth about oil shortages and somehow convincing people that if they kept the speed limit at 55 miles an hour, there was going to be a significant reduction in consumption of petroleum products. But if you have driven the I-90 right around Albany, you've paid your fair share to American general avenue. Been there, Mr. Shurman: the I-90 right at Albany? A lot of hills. The radar detector doesn't work worth a damn because it's only by the time you get to the top of the hill that your detector catches the radar, and by then he's already got you on the screen.

**Mr. Peter Shurman:** Two hundred and sixty dollars.

**Mr. Peter Kormos:** Two hundred and sixty bucks, says Mr. Shurman. US or Canadian?

**Mr. Peter Shurman:** That's US.

**Mr. Peter Kormos:** That was back when a US dollar cost more than 97 cents Canadian, I'll tell you.

Do you know what? There have been a couple of newspaper articles lately, columns by observers here at Queen's Park who have commented on the pompousness and arrogance of this government, the sort of know-it-all kind of attitude: They're right; everybody else is wrong. They get to engage in language that is defamatory: Jeff Leal and his reference about my colleague from Trinity—Padina, "What were you doing in the back seat of that limo?" and the Minister of Health referring to yet another Jew Democrat's five-year bathroom break—this sort of infantile, schoolboy humour. These are moronic, idiotic comments from people who clearly have too much time on their hands, who have very little to contribute in terms of real policy commentary and debate, and who are prepared to be spoon-fed.

One of the functions of the opposition is to keep a check on the government. One of the functions of government backbenchers is to keep a check on the cabinet. It's a very important role, rather than sitting there with their thumbs inserted and nodding, following marching orders, little marionettes with the strings being pulled by the Premier's office henchpeople, the behind-the-scenes people, the Premier's office Gestapo, the ones who report back and keep track of members and make sure that members haven't violated any of the marching orders or misquoted or misstated any of the canned speeches they're told to give.

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The presumptuousness of this government when it comes to a hard-working profession like truckers is amazing. I, for one, am prepared to listen to the truckers, to listen to safety experts, to listen and consider alternatives, to try to identify what the real problem is. It's only until you identify what the real problem is that you start to consider what the real solutions are. I, for one,

think that one of the solutions in terms of the safety of our highways is a stronger police presence.

Look, the scofflaw who will drive at recklessly high speeds in his or her truck will also think nothing about disconnecting or disabling the governor or the speed limiter, won't they? You understand the rationale? How do you get caught with your governor or your speed limiter disconnected if you're exceeding 105? You're going to be deemed to not have a connected speed limiter. So if the person wants to drive 120 and 130, if he's one of those people who is doing it unsafely now, he's still going to do it, because he's going to take his chances. People speed every day not expecting to get caught.

This is warm, feel-good legislation that appeals to people who have concerns about truck volume and who find it, quite frankly, frightening from time to time to manoeuvre highways where there is a huge truck volume.

I understand the stats to reveal that the largest number of truck accidents are ones that occur on two-lane highways, where the speed limits are 80 and 90 kilometres an hour. You don't have to travel too far north of Barrie to understand what that means, do you, Speaker? We've got northern members in this House who remind this government as often as they can about the need to four-lane those two-lane highways in the interests of safety—just like that 406. Thank goodness we got it four-laned down to Port Robinson now. The plans are there for the extension of that four-laning further down to East Main Street and hopefully down to Port Colborne, to give effect to a north-south corridor. The four-laning of highways is going to go a long way to making those highways safer, those trucking highways that are travelled as two lanes now.

Let's put this to committee and see what the real data are, instead of what people want to pick and choose selectively based on a position that they feel compelled to take. I can't understand why people would be so absolute in their position without having heard all of the evidence. My goodness, even if your only exposure to courtrooms is Law and Order, you know that the judge admonishes people not to reach a conclusion until they've heard all of the evidence. Good advice, isn't it? It is pompous and arrogant to assume a position without having heard from all the parties and all the players, with having heard only half the story and having heard the appeals to people's fear rather than the appeals to people's logic, without having heard the broad range of solutions after determining whether or not there's a problem.

New Democrats encourage this bill to go to committee. Gilles Bisson, our transportation critic, will occupy himself with that committee work. I encourage truckers from across Ontario and others interested in highway safety to make sure they're attending it.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson):** Questions and/or comments? The honourable Minister of Natural Resources.

**Hon. Donna H. Cansfield:** It's a pleasure to stand up in support of this bill, certainly because I had some participation as Minister of Transportation.



One of the very clear pieces of evidence that came forward was when I had the opportunity to meet with the independent trucking association, the truckers' association, the provincial police and regional police, all together in the same room, as we looked at whether or not this idea of speed governors was a good idea. It was unequivocal: Every one of them said it was a good idea, with the exception of the independents, who felt that because they didn't have to participate in governors, they would have an economic advantage.

We don't have accidents in this province, we have crashes and we have collisions and they take lives. The incidence of truck rollover in this province is contributing significantly, in the billions of dollars, to the economy in this province as well. It takes 235 metres to stop a truck that's going 120 kilometres an hour. That is significantly reduced when the speed is 105 kilometres an hour. So it's an opportunity for us to not only reduce the collisions but also significantly impact the economic challenges that are faced when truck rollovers do occur.

This is just a good example that came from the industry itself. It is supported by the Quebec government. It is actually supported by the Minister of Transport federally. It makes good sense. There is no reason why you have to continue to speed down the road in order to get from point A to point B, virtually taking other people's lives in your hands.

You have the opportunity instead to work responsibly. As a matter of fact, most of those truckers are doing that right now. So all we're going to do is what they asked us to do, and that's to provide a safe haven.

The member from Welland indicates that this won't have an opportunity for discussion. I do not know of any bill that hasn't gone forward to committee. People can wholeheartedly have an opportunity for discussion on this and get to those statistics that the individual would like to speak about.

**Mr. Frank Klees:** I want to thank the member from Welland for his contribution to this debate. I believe that he raises some very important issues that I as well have advocated in terms of allowing this bill to be more carefully examined.

The reality is that most of the crashes that relate to trucks are not caused by speed at all. They are, in fact, caused by mechanical failure. I spoke as recently as yesterday to chief Armand La Barge of York Regional Police. That police force conducted a blitz of trucks within the last couple of months. One out of two trucks was pulled off the road—one out of two—for mechanical substandard condition.

I say to the government and to the Minister of Transportation that what we need to do is focus on that, more so than on the speed. If an unsafe vehicle is travelling at 80 kilometres an hour, or at 120 kilometres an hour, the difference, I suggest to you, is not in the speed; it is the condition of that vehicle. What we need to do is ensure that there is proper enforcement for inspection of those vehicles, proper resources for enforcement of our speed limits, and that's what will get us to where we need to be.

The fact is that this is a simple solution. The next solution, of course, if in fact the logic of this government is correct, is that every automobile, every passenger vehicle, will also have speed governors, because you can't rely on people to obey the law.

**Mr. Mike Colle:** I was just recalling, when we were in opposition—the member from Welland reminded me of that—that almost every week there would be a flying truck tire on the 401 and other highways, and the government in power at the time said it wasn't a problem. But we had to bring to the government's attention that these flying tires were inexcusable. Thankfully, as a result of the opposition bringing that to their attention, there were some measures taken. So we haven't had this plague of flying truck tires killing people on our highways.

I think, as the member from Welland has said, we sometimes take our truckers for granted. I ask people, "Every time you go to the grocery store, how did that food from the farm get to the store so you can bring it home?" We almost think it's automatic. We forget the blood, sweat and tears of the trucking industry that ensures that we get fresh, clean food on our tables, delivered without our having to do any of the work except basically appear at the grocery store. So we shouldn't take truckers for granted.

The other thing about safety—and this is seat belt safety week. There was another incident today: a person in an accident on the 401, thrown out of his vehicle. It appears that there was no seat belt being used. Last week there were four young people thrown out of a vehicle, injured—no seat belt. We have to somehow get the message across of the fundamental defensive use of a seat belt.

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I see the young pages here. Don't even get in a car if a person doesn't have a seat belt on. Demand that everybody have their seat belts on all the time. It will save lives. It is crazy not to have your seat belt on.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson):** We have room for one more question and/or comment.

**Mr. Ted Chudleigh:** The member for Welland is always very provocative and raises good points. I particularly liked his comments on this one, when he says that the government says, "Trust me." When the government says, "Trust me," antennas should go up all over the place. We should be very much aware.

I'm going to speak to this bill in a few minutes and I might use a few examples of where the government asked for that trust and it turned out that that trust wasn't warranted. So when the member from Welland talks about being fastidious about checking this bill and seeing how the people that are going to pay the freight eventually—those are the truckers of this province; let's see how they feel about this legislation.

Maybe they're supportive. Maybe the minister has the right story on this, this time. Maybe they do, but let's hear from them. Let's hear it from their mouth, not your mouth. I don't necessarily trust a government that says, "Don't worry; everything's all right."



Look at the economy. The government would have us believe that everything is just fine in the economy. We're just humming along. Everything's wonderful.

We're losing thousands, tens of thousands of jobs a month. They're going to Alberta. We're losing 70,000 to 80,000 people who have left Ontario and gone to Alberta to work. Ontario is on the verge of becoming a have-not province for the first time in the history of this great country.

*Interjection.*

**Mr. Ted Chudleigh:** Oh, and they're concerned about that. They're yelling at me, "This isn't possible." Well, it is possible. We're on the verge. Things are not all right in his province. When the government says, "Trust me; everything's okay," my antennas go up.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson):** The honourable member from Welland has up to two minutes to respond.

**Mr. Peter Kormos:** Mr. Klees has raised an ominous, indeed bedevilling, concern, and that is that it's this government's agenda at the end of the day to address its absence of policing on our highways by requiring every motor vehicle to have a governor installed.

I find that a very peculiar position for this government to be in. Talk about Big Brother at his—or her, Big Sister—ultimate. But I suppose if speeding is the problem, then I say to Mr. Klees, maybe the government's onto something. If speeding's the problem, maybe the government's onto something.

One of the other problems, and I see it in city traffic too, is that we don't understand that there are two types of people on our highways. There's people like you or me, as domestic drivers, and then there's people earning a living. For the same reason that we should yield the right of way to a TTC bus driver or to a commercial truck in the city who's trying to make a left turn and being bedevilled by traffic—here's some working stiff trying to make 20 bucks an hour, and I can't believe the incredibly inconsiderate people who won't cut the guy or gal a little bit of slack.

What I see on the highways all the time is people in their little Chevy Novas thinking they're going to challenge some great, big, huge multi-ton truck. For Pete's sake, give the trucker the right of way. It's like the guy in the Ferrari who was cut off by a truck, pulls him over; the guy in the Ferrari gets out and says "Ah, karate," and the truck driver goes, "Aha, monkey wrench."

At the end of the day, maybe some education about deferring to people who earn their livings on our highways would be a little better course of action.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson):** Thank you to the honourable member for your contribution to the debate. Further debate?

**Ms. Helena Jaczek:** I'm sure it will come as no surprise to my colleagues in this House that I'm rising in support of Bill 41. Earlier today, as I was looking at some of the statistics around safety and so on, I felt, no doubt, that members of this House would be able to reach some consensus on the value of this particular bill. It provides

an excellent framework to have some regulations based on good statistics related to safety that will certainly improve the lives of the residents in my riding.

Through my riding, there is a stretch of the 400 highway through the southern part of the very beautiful township of King, and also the 404 forms part of the boundary to my riding and then it goes up through Whitchurch-Stouffville. There are numerous times when there are crashes on those highways. Obviously, there's the potential tragedy of injury and loss of life, but there's also the terrible inconvenience for those people commuting, who have to use other roads through King and through Whitchurch-Stouffville in order to avoid road closures.

As it relates to safety, I think some of the members in this House will recall that our colleague from London—Fanshawe had a narrow escape last week, a very dangerous situation on the 401. I am sure all members will be very, very pleased to know that, of course, he did emerge unscathed. He is someone who contributes to the debate in this House and relishes it. So he illustrated why this type of legislation is so important.

I think one of the very interesting statistics is that studies show that casualties would be reduced by 7% for every one-kilometre-per-hour reduction in average vehicle speed, so that's truly significant. We have some data saying that some 15% of trucks are exceeding 110 kilometres per hour. If, for example, the speed limiter was set at 105 kilometres an hour, we know that if one of those trucks had been going some five kilometres higher, that would be a 35% reduction in the risk of a casualty. To me, this is very, very important legislation.

I was also very interested to read some of the quotes that we've noted. Another colleague, the honourable member for Simcoe North, was quoted in the *Orillia Packet and Times*, Monday, March 24, 2008: "There won't be any problem for our party. We will be supporting that bill because it's a Progressive Conservative bill," he actually said. He's clearly not aware that this is a government bill, Bill 41. "It does save fuel, it saves emissions and it probably does make our roads a little bit safer."

There was another quote from someone I know very well, Brian Patterson, who is the director of the Ontario Safety League. We conversed on this particular bill, and he was quoted in the *Toronto Star*, March 20, 2008, as saying that this was a very "solid move." He actually called, and we met on this bill, and he certainly convinced me that this was something that would be extremely useful to ensure it is enacted and that it would improve safety for my residents.

I think it's important, of course, that there will be an extensive educational period where we will be working with our stakeholders to inform operators, both from here in Ontario and from other Canadian and US jurisdictions, to ensure compliance with our legislation. Again, with my background in public health injury prevention and health promotion, that educational period is extremely important to ensure compliance.



In summary, and not wishing really to belabour the point, because the merits of this bill are so outstanding, I would simply conclude by saying that I would hope all the honourable members in this House will be supporting this bill.

1640

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Chudleigh):** Questions and comments.

**Mr. Ernie Hardeman:** I want to thank the member from Oak Ridges–Markham for the presentation. I agree with the member that, first of all, everyone would support this bill, and even though it may have some shortcomings, it goes a long way to do what needs doing in helping to create greater truck safety and reduce the emissions into our environment and, thirdly, to protect us from the ever-rising cost of fuel. The projected savings of fuel—though there seems some variation as to who is creating the numbers—is significant to warrant doing something like this.

I want to point out the importance of public participation in the whole process. The member started off in the presentation talking about, “This is a good framework.” A framework is what one sets, or what the government sets, as they go to the people during an election. What we’re debating here is a bill to be implemented. I think the public should expect governments to have legislation that will cover the fine points of the impact it will have on the public as we go forward. And the issue of not putting in the numbers in the bill of any kind: We don’t know what the speed that we are talking about setting will be, or whether it will be changed from time to time as the ministers change and as the circumstances change on the road—whether that would be raised or lowered.

The other part, as I listen to the debate from a lot of members, is that “commercial vehicle” is not defined. So far, the debate has been primarily on whether a commercial vehicle would include a bus, whether it would include just the Greyhound buses or school buses. The way the bill is written, it doesn’t prohibit or doesn’t exclude the minister from including SUVs. It doesn’t say that the minister will not include cars—

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson):** Thank you. Further questions and/or comments?

**Mr. Peter Kormos:** I should tell you that the member for Toronto–Danforth, Mr. Tabuns, will be speaking to this bill in short order. So the folks who are watching and who know Mr. Tabuns’s ability to address things from a variety of perspectives, in particular strong environmental credentials, should stay tuned. It will be a short 20 to 25 minutes’ time when Mr. Tabuns will have the floor and will be addressing this bill on behalf of New Democrats here at Queen’s Park. I look forward to his comments.

I’m somewhat amazed, however, at the member for Oak Ridges–Markham’s expressing hope that everybody supports this bill. I don’t know what the magic is in unanimity. There are a variety of perspectives here. There are a number of interests that will be affected by

the bill. There will be members of the provincial community who will support the legislation, who will agree with it, who will applaud it, and there will be others who will criticize it and disagree with it. So there is no magic, I say to you with all due respect, in unanimity. What’s important is that a Parliament reflects all of Ontario, and that diverse points of view, diverse perspectives, diverse interests, be given a voice in this chamber. That’s part of the difficulty we have in a majority government: not understanding the incredibly important role that the opposition plays. The opposition’s role is to criticize; it’s to critique; it’s to speak for the people the government isn’t speaking for. From time to time, opposition members will be speaking for the minority. The minority in a democracy deserves a voice as well. From time to time the government will be grossly out of step, and it’s the opposition caucus that will be speaking for the majority. I say that there is a variety of perspectives on this legislation that has to be addressed at committee. Such enthusiastic support at this point is not warranted.

**Mr. Peter Shurman:** I would like to congratulate my colleague from Oak Ridges–Markham on her comments. I’ll be speaking to this bill at greater length and address some of the same things myself. My riding and hers are not particularly far apart, and when it comes to Highway 407, we share some of the same concerns. Highway 407 leads into Highway 400, the gateway to the north, and we also share a lot of cottagers. So this bill is of issue to all of us.

My colleague raises the issue of speed as it relates to accidents, and there certainly is validity there, although I’d like to call the attention of the Minister of Transportation and members of this House to the fact that that cuts both ways. One of the things that has always driven me crazy—no pun intended—is the fact that the passing lane on 400 highways in this province causes an awful lot of accidents by virtue of the fact that people seem to think that if they sit in it at 90 kilometres per hour, it’s okay. When you look at the backlogs and the way some traffic mixes, you can get into just as much trouble from an accident perspective doing that as you can from speeding.

To the point she raises regarding the fact that someone had written that this was a Conservative bill rather than what it is—indeed, a government bill—I would remind the member that my colleague from Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock, a Conservative, did put in a bill almost identical to this one as private members’ business in 2006 and it was defeated by virtually the same government that we sit opposite right now. I’m delighted that they’ve come around and are in support and are putting forward their own bill, and certainly we’ll support it, but the issue has to do with the details, and the devil is always in the details.

I look forward to speaking to this at greater length.

**Mr. Ted Chudleigh:** I would make comment on the member for Oak Ridges–Markham, and it’s further to the point that I made in my last comments. The member suggests that our member from Simcoe North said it was a PC bill, and the member from Oak Ridges–Markham



said obviously he was wrong; this was a government bill. Well, what is a bill and where does it come from?

I think our member from Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock introduced this bill some months ago, and the bill she introduced is almost identical to this bill. So the government has simply lifted what it saw as good legislation from the member for Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock and made it their own. That's all fair game in this House, but for someone to suggest that this is their bill in its exclusivity is obviously—I can't say "misleading," Mr. Speaker, but obviously they're going down that road.

*Interjection.*

**Mr. Ted Chudleigh:** I withdraw that. But it is obviously not in the spirit of what we would like to see happening in this House.

I would suggest that the member may want to make comment on this in her wrap-up moments as to whether or not this bill originated or had its genesis in the heart of a Liberal soul or whether in fact it was a bill that was developed by the PC party, by the member for Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock, put forward by her, and was simply lifted by the Liberal government, to be made into one of their own bills. I'd be interested in her comments on that.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson):** The honourable member from Oak Ridges-Markham has up to two minutes to respond.

**Ms. Helena Jacek:** I'd like to thank my colleagues in this House, the members from Oxford, Welland, Thornhill and Halton, for commenting on my remarks.

I'd like to say that certainly through the debate this afternoon we've heard some very interesting history that relates to the former government's business and now this current government's business.

I'd like to assure my colleagues that I know that this government, the McGuinty government, has the health and safety of all Ontarians as one of their most important principles behind any legislation that we are introducing. So though I have heard that most members here certainly acknowledge the excellence in terms of saving lives, in terms of reducing speed in trucks over a certain tonnage and also the very important environmental consequences of this legislation in terms of reducing fuel consumption and therefore greenhouse gases, it is clear that what we are putting in front of this House is extremely valuable legislation.

650

There is clearly more time for debate, as we have heard that many other members will be addressing this. I'm sure we will all be paying very close attention to their points as we consider, at the end of the day, whether to support it or not. I certainly believe that when the case is as clear as this—that this legislation is excellent—we should all support this bill.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson):** I thank the honourable member for her contribution to the debate. Further debate?

**Mr. Ted Chudleigh:** It's a pleasure to join this debate. One of the questions that we have to ask, in so

much of the legislation that is "good for us" as Ontarians—somebody has to pay the freight. All the costs of this program—the purchasing of these speed limiters, the upkeep of them, the maintenance of them, making sure they're working and all those things—have to be assumed by somebody.

In this case, it's not the government. It's not us in this Legislature. It's not the law enforcement agencies across the province. It's the truckers of this province: people who work long hours, people who obey the law, people who go home when they have an opportunity, people who have families—the hard-working people of Ontario. They represent the best of what a citizen of Ontario is. In that representation, let us be very clear that they are the ones who are going to be paying the freight for this bill. So I think it's very important for the members of this House to make very, very sure that we get this bill right and, if we're asking them to pay the freight, that we make it very, very worthwhile.

These people, particularly in these times, when we're headed into very uncertain financial times—I would say that we're headed into a recession or close to recession. The government would disagree. They would say that we're going to have a soft landing and that we're going to be okay. Whatever it is, we're headed downhill in the economy right now based on the increase of our Canadian dollar, based on the effects that our manufacturing industry is suffering, based on the cost of fuel that we're seeing slowly being integrated into our economy. For a great number of reasons, we're headed into a difficult financial time ahead. I would expect that the government would want to do something to insulate us against the worst-case scenario in that situation. I haven't seen that action taken to any degree yet. I guess that's somewhat disappointing.

But when it comes to truckers who have to work a little longer in the day in order to make up for any losses they incur or any increased expenses they incur, I think we owe it to them, through the committee process in this House, to make sure that we get this bill right when it does pass.

From the sounds of things, everybody's talking about what a great bill it is. It was introduced by a Conservative member, as I pointed out earlier. For that reason, it would be wonderful to see it be enacted in the province of Ontario, even though it is now a government bill. The fact is that we want to make sure we know what we're voting on and what kinds of issues this is going to cause to the people in the province who have to be affected by this.

It's interesting that the member from Welland talked about the Teamsters, who probably represent a significant portion of the people who drive trucks on the highways of Ontario and across this continent. The Teamsters don't support this bill, according to the member. I found that very interesting. I'd like to know why they don't support this bill. I know that Teamsters are very conscientious citizens. I know that they drive trucks extremely carefully.



For a period of time I was a salesman across Canada, and I found myself often on the roads in the three Prairie provinces, miles from anywhere, heading for a town that was perhaps 100 kilometres, 250 kilometres away—driving across the prairies, which are beautiful the first time you do it, are always a very attractive place in the world, but they become very, very monotonous. Occasionally, you would see a car that was broken down on the side of the road. Almost without exception, if that car had been there for any length of time, there would be a truck pulled up in front of or behind it. The truckers are the ones who helped people on the road. They were the ones who showed up when someone was having a problem and needed some help on the highway. I used to call them the knights of the highways, because they were the ones who would stop and help people who were in difficulties and having difficulties.

That happens in Ontario as well. It happens on the two-lane highways in Ontario; not so much on the four-lane highways. We have tow trucks, of course, that patrol those highways, and you're not long getting help from a tow truck if you have problems on the 400 highways. But if you're off those highways or in northern Ontario or eastern Ontario, if you're in trouble on the road it's probably going to be a trucker who stops and gives aid to you. So I think it's important that we remember that the Teamsters don't necessarily support this. I would like to hear in committee as to why that is.

Earlier we heard the minister make comment, and she made a quote, I think, from the member for St. Catharines, that this was a no-brainer. I don't usually heckle, Mr. Speaker, as you know, but I heckled in that particular case and I suggested that we should consider the source of that comment.

I well remember in this House when a minister of the crown not long ago suggested that the Human Rights Commissioner in this province strongly supported her amendments to adoption regulations in this province. The member is currently the Minister of Economic Development and Trade. She was the Minister of Community and Social Services at the time, and she was passing an amendment to the adoption act, allowing the opening of adoption records to anyone who cared to look at them. We were very much opposed to this aspect. Although we liked almost every other part of the bill, we were very much opposed to the fact that the province of Ontario had made a promise to the people who put their children up for adoption and we were going to break that promise.

**Mr. Bob Delaney:** On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: Bill 41 contains no provisions pertaining to adoption, and I would like to ask the member to focus on the topic under discussion.

**Mr. Ted Chudleigh:** On the same point of order, Mr. Speaker: This is about the government's ability to ask us to have faith. In this particular case, that faith was not warranted, and I'm using that as an example.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson):** I was listening attentively to the member for Halton. I believe he was on topic. Continue.

**Mr. Ted Chudleigh:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Anyway, the long and the short of that: We won't spend a lot of time on adoption because, as the member from Mississauga points out, this is not about adoption, but it is about trucking and speed control on our highways.

The member will remember that the Human Rights Commissioner, even though the minister suggested in the House that she was strongly supportive of the amendments—it turned out the next day in headlines across the paper that she was not strongly supportive of the legislation.

I say: be aware. When the minister of the crown and the government tells you that everything is well, everything is hunky-dory and that everybody supports this piece of legislation, just maybe it's not always so. Maybe it's just a little different than that, as it was in the case of that adoption legislation, which has since been struck down by the Supreme Court. The Supreme Court agreed with this party, that it was legislation that should not be in Ontario.

When the minister says that everything is okay and everybody supports it, and then I hear that the Teamsters don't support it, I begin to question as to maybe there are some things in this bill that I don't understand. I'm certainly not involved in the trucking industry other than in a peripheral sense. I respect the trucking industry tremendously because they do work such long hours. They work hard. They're independent businessmen; a lot of them own their own trucks, and those are very expensive trucks. They take great risks, especially with the fluctuation of fuel these days being one of the major import costs they have to deal with. They don't know where that's going, and they take a number of gambles. I have great respect for private business people who take those risks and those gambles, and hopefully they pay off.

1700

Other comments that have been made are whether it's 95 kilometres an hour that the trucks will be restricted to or whether it will be 105 kilometres an hour. The minister and, I think, the parliamentary assistant suggested that, although the legislation didn't say it in print, the number would be 105 kilometres per hour. Again, the government is saying, "Trust me. It's going to be 105. That's going to be the regulation when it comes into being." As I said earlier, when the government says, "Trust me," my antennae go up and I become concerned.

I think highway safety is of concern to everybody in Ontario, whether you're a driver or not, because if you're not a driver on the roads, you're a passenger. Making sure of safety on those roads is paramount to everybody's thinking.

I think one of the things we have to remember is that the speed limit on our 400-series highways is 100 kilometres an hour—that used to be the old 60 miles an hour. When the four-lane highways developed in Ontario in the 1950s and 1960s, the speed limit on the 401 was 70 miles an hour. It was the oil bubble of 1971-72 that caused speed limits to be lowered across the United States, Canada and much of Europe. Most of the states in the United States are back up to 70 or 75—certainly 65



miles an hour—and strongly enforced. You may get a five-mile-an-hour variation before the police officer pulls you over, but you don't often get a 10-mile-per-hour difference—that would probably be about 16 kilometres per hour.

I think the same thing is true in Europe. In fact, as we know, in Germany the autobahn doesn't have a speed limit. I was on this autobahn in 1990 or 1991, and travelled from Holland to Berlin, and I can well remember travelling along that highway at what I considered to be an unsafe speed. I was probably doing about 140 kilometres an hour. I was going as fast as I felt comfortable going, but there were cars going by me at great speeds. There was just a whoosh as they went by. They were travelling at least 200 kilometres an hour, and there was no speed limit on that highway.

I thought then, as I think now, that the danger is not in the speed you are going. The danger is in the differences in speed of the cars on the highway and the changing of lanes. If everyone is going 100 klicks an hour, the highway is safe. If everyone is going 120 klicks an hour, the highway is safe. It's when someone is going 100 klicks an hour, and someone is doing 130 klicks an hour, and somebody decides to change lanes in front of the 130-kilometre-an-hour speeder that we have a recipe for disaster.

Making sure that the speed range and the enforcement of the law is such that the speed range is as narrow as possible and that switching of lanes is as restricted as possible and the courtesy of the drivers on that highway will make it a safer place—I don't think it's speed alone that dictates safety on the highway. I would think that fact would also come out in a strong way from the people who would participate in hearings on this bill.

I spoke about this bill being introduced by the member from Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock as a private member's bill. It was voted on after that debate, one Thursday morning, and a number of the Liberal caucus, including some cabinet ministers, voted against this legislation at that time, and they've brought in an almost identical bill. Of course, I guess that speaks to the flexibility, as it were, of the Liberal philosophy: Sometimes you vote for a bill, and sometimes you vote against it; it depends how you feel that day as to whether you're going to vote for it or against it. It's interesting that so many of the Liberals voted against this legislation when it was introduced by the PCs, but now an almost identical bill is being introduced by the Liberals. I'm sure the government is encouraging their backbenchers to vote for this bill, and if need be, they'll be using the whip to encourage the members to vote in that favour.

Another aspect: As I mentioned, the speed limits that we have in Ontario and the safety on the roads are directly related to the variations of speed that you get on a highway and what speed people are comfortable driving at. There's also a philosophical question, perhaps, dealing with the law. Many states in the United States that I drive through from time to time have a very narrow margin that the law enforcement offers between the

posted speed limit and the time in which they pull you over.

There's always a debate in Ontario as to whether you can go 20 klicks or 30 klicks over the speed limit; whether the sun is shining and you can go faster; whether there is a little mist in the air and you have to go slower; or exactly how far above the speed limit you can go before you get stopped by the police officers. I have always felt, and perhaps it's my conservative nature, that we should have a very narrow range. In other words, the law is the law, and it should be enforced. It creates a respect for the law, not only on the highways but throughout our society.

I think that a safe society, a growing society, a society that is desirable on all levels, is one that is primarily, as one of its basic points, a safe society. A safe society is one in which the majority of the citizens respect the law. I don't think we respect a law when it says that the speed limit is 100 kilometres an hour and we run down the highway at 120 kilometres an hour or more. I think that promotes a disrespect for the law. So I, for one, would like to see a 115-kilometre-per-hour speed limit, with perhaps a five-kilometre margin of safety. The police officers would start laying charges at 120 klicks. In other words, if it says 115, they mean 115, not this huge variation of 20 or 30 kilometres an hour.

I think safety lies in those kinds of things as well. It's interesting that that's not mentioned or talked about in this bill, although it's very much part of the safety on the roads of Ontario.

The other thing that happens in this bill is: Who is the bill going to apply to? Is it going to apply to tractor-trailers? Is it going to apply to vans? Is it going to apply to state trucks? What about a camper hooked up to a pickup truck, a camper that is perhaps 30 or 40 feet long? Is this law going to apply to them? Is the law going to apply to a Winnebago-type vehicle that is perhaps 50 feet long? I'm always surprised that a regular driver's licence is all you need to drive those very, very large vehicles through country streets, country roads and lanes. I think that's a safety issue in the province of Ontario, and one that perhaps should be looked at as well.

1710

We're winding down here. I think we've covered a lot of it.

Interestingly, in Europe, where they've had mandated speed limiters, drivers are generally paid on an hourly basis, whereas in Canada they're paid on a trip basis. The differences in those two methods of payment will make a huge difference in whether or not those speed limiters affect the take-home pay of a trucker. If he's paid by the hour, of course, it doesn't really matter. He gets in his truck, he goes to where he's going and he gets paid for every hour he's there. But I live in Halton, where there are a number of gravel pits, and truckers who use those gravel pits are by and large a very safe-driving bunch of drivers. They get paid by the load, and if they can get an extra load in a day, they can do a little bit better. They drive safely, but they drive efficiently. This legislation



may affect them in some way, and I'd like to hear from them what they think of this legislation.

All in all, although this bill has some merit on its face, I think we need some committee time with it to see how the people that it's going to affect feel about this particular bill.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson):** Questions and/or comments?

**Mr. Michael A. Brown:** I thought I might be able to help my friend the member for Halton with some of the information he's requesting.

This bill will deal with trucks that weigh more than 11,794 kilograms. Those are big trucks. Any truck manufactured after 1995 already has the speed limiter incorporated in the design of the engine, and this will include all trucks in that category that operate in Ontario, whether they're from outside the jurisdiction or not.

The benefits of this legislation include 280,000 tonnes less of greenhouse gases being emitted into the environment per year. It is the equivalent of taking 2,700 tractor-trailers off the road a year. We expect that the speed limiters will help Ontario achieve 2% of the 2014 greenhouse gas emissions reduction target, 2% just by limiting.

You should also know that in monitoring the speed of trucks in this province on the 400-series highways at three different locations, the ministry has determined that 85% of the trucks already comply. We're dealing with 15% of trucks that exceed the 105-kilometre speed limit. As the member points out, the variance in speed is often the cause of the problem, rather than the actual speed.

What we are doing here is what the major trucking organizations have already done, and that is to put speed limiters on their vehicles so that they will achieve savings for the trucking company and for the shippers.

**Mr. Ernie Hardeman:** I just respond to the presentation made by my colleague and friend from Halton—a very good recitation. I think he points out some of the challenges with this legislation though. As I said earlier, it's a piece of legislation where the objectives are sound and appropriate, but there are some challenges in the way it's written.

Then, as I was listening to the comments from the parliamentary assistant, actually, rather than answering questions, it brought me more concerns. Maybe at another time, he could answer the questions, but if 85% of the trucks that we're talking about in this legislation are already complying, then doesn't that reduce the benefits that we're talking about by 85%? I'm sure the numbers used for the greenhouse gas emissions are based on reducing the number of trucks by a certain amount, but if you're reducing all the trucks, it's a different amount than if you're only reducing that last 15% that you're bringing down in speed. I think that's a very important thing.

I think he mentioned in his comments that this legislation was going to take a lot of the trucks off the road and out of the mix, because they were going to lower them down. A lot of the people that I've talked to who

are not supportive of doing this—they say that not only will this legislation reduce the emissions by the percentage that they're talking about, a lot of the people that are brokers in the trucking business believe that it will be reduced because this will drive them out of business. They will no longer be competitive in other environments. I don't say that I necessarily agree with those comments, I'm just saying that that's what the people think.

**Mr. Peter Shurman:** I'd just like to rise to congratulate my colleague from Halton on an excellent presentation.

He raises a couple of interesting points, one of which I've been publicly supportive of, with some strings attached to it, for a number of years, and that is the possibility of looking at what I call the speed of the road. Although there is a posted limit, as the member points out, on 400-series highways of 100 kilometres per hour, it does, indeed, date back to the trumped-up gas shortage of the 1970s when American states lowered their speed limits to 55 miles per hour; long since gone in favour of 60, 65, and in some cases 75 mile per hour speed limits. Why? Because automobiles in the 1970s and automobiles today are rather different.

We have to remember that, in the context of a bill that considers regulating the speed of trucks, we are in the business of sharing our highways. It's not just trucks on the road; it's cars.

Also, the point that the member raises with regard to truckers being independent business people: Independent business people, forming approximately 85% of all business being done in the province of Ontario, are a very significant part of our population, and a part of our population that we need to support in every way possible—as I have been doing on another front, the convenience store front, in this House over the past couple of weeks.

It is very important, to echo the words of the member from Halton, that in the case of Bill 41, we get it right. I don't think there is much opposition in this House to the concept of controlling speed on our highways and thereby helping our atmosphere and environment and lowering the accident rate. But getting it right is something that we can do as this bill is refined in committee, and I support the member and concur 100%. We agree where control is concerned; we don't like the bureaucratic aspects of it, but we certainly want to see the appropriate modifications made.

**Mr. Mike Colle:** Bill 41 is a bill that is very topical because of the increasing concern about road safety, not only for truckers but for all of our citizens around our highways. Mr. Speaker, you certainly know how important safety is as you're travelling along Highway 26, on the beautiful shores of Georgian Bay, going towards North America's longest, widest beach, Wasaga Beach. You know that so many people come from all over Ontario to go there, so you want to make sure as the summer months are coming that people are travelling safely, and you want to make sure that if they're on their way to Wasaga, they're buckled up and, in partnership



with the trucking industry, that they're also doing the speed limit. This is going to encourage, I think, more safety from everybody, and I think it's a step in the right direction.

It also is, as many have said, part of reducing greenhouse gases, because reduced speed does certainly help with air quality. The comment from the member from Thornhill about speed and the 1970s, when we had the oil crisis: It's actually one of the, you might say, silver linings in the atrocious price of gas. People are now going to hybrids, people are driving slower. There are more four-cylinder cars.

I just talked to someone who got back from San Francisco, who said that the whole city of San Francisco, if people are driving cars, they're driving Priuses—not to plug that car, but it's a four-cylinder car that gets almost 50 miles to the gallon. That's the trend of the future. So this bill is really part of the future trend, where people are not going to be driving as fast or driving as much, hopefully, and maybe using more hybrids if they have to drive. So this is going in the right direction.

1720

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson):** The member for Halton has up to two minutes to respond.

**Mr. Ted Chudleigh:** I had in my notes a question for the government member concerning the 280 tonnes of pollution that—

**Mr. Michael A. Brown:** It's 280,000.

**Mr. Ted Chudleigh:**—280,000 tonnes of pollution that would be saved. The Ontario Trucking Association says that that number is 140,000, which is half of what the government is saying. The member for Oxford pointed out that 85% of the trucks on the road already have these facilities on their vehicles. I wonder if perhaps sometime this afternoon, after further debate, the government could clarify where they came up with the 280,000? Is that for all trucks, based on the savings, or is that on the 15% of trucks that would be different? How do their 280,000 tonnes differ from the Ontario Trucking Association's estimates of 140,000 tonnes? That is a huge difference—that's half—and I would be interested in where that difference comes from, how the government arrived at their figures, and why their figures are so different from the Ontario Trucking Association's.

I'd like to thank the members very much who participated in the debate and made comments about my speech. I look forward to further debate on this bill, Bill 41, and I also look forward very much to the hearings at committee. I think that committee should be travelling across Ontario, because the trucking industry varies tremendously across this province. The trucking industry in the GTA is entirely different than it is in Thunder Bay or Barrie or eastern Ontario or western Ontario.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson):** Further debate?

**Mr. Peter Tabuns:** Those who are watching this should know that it's late on a Thursday afternoon, and any excuse to bang on the desks will be taken.

**Mr. Peter Kormos:** It's all because of you.

**Mr. Peter Tabuns:** I'm sure.

My remarks on this bill will be relatively short. I appreciate the comments of the member from Welland, who has spoken well and at length about issues that are going to have to be addressed in the course of committee hearings. I want to say that when you look at the history of this issue, Environment Canada, when it outlined a variety of options for Canada to deal with greenhouse gas emissions, noted that control of the speed for trucks was an option that should be considered in a Canadian climate change control plan.

The government of Quebec, in putting together its climate plan, listed speed limitations for trucks as one of its measures. If you go to the Internet and check on the situation in the United States, you will find that a number of large trucking companies have brought in limiters on their trucks to reduce the fossil fuel consumption—the diesel consumption—as a way of dealing with rising costs in the fuel market. So there's a general sense that controlling the speed of trucks can reduce fuel consumption and thus greenhouse gas emissions. That's a useful thing.

I think the issues that have been raised, in particular by the member from Welland, but others as well about potential safety issues, do need to be addressed in committee. The government, the minister, should look at the experience in the United States, where the trucking companies have, on their own volition, put those speed limiters in place as a way of reducing consumption. Let's find out what their safety experience is. If indeed there is no safety issue here, then the reduction in greenhouse gas emissions is something that should be broadly supported. I think it's a good thing that this bill is going to committee so that people can come, speak and look for ways of addressing the different issues that have been raised and forge, in the end, a bill that will be useful in this province.

I do want to say, though, that one of the things that left a sour taste in my mouth when I heard the speeches from the Minister of Transportation and others from the government benches is the whole issue of climate change and the adequacy of their response.

It should never be forgotten that the Premier of this province 10 months ago promised a climate plan. The Premier of this province said that climate change is one of the great challenges of our time. There are ministers here tonight whose relatives, friends and constituents will face profound problems as the planet heats up, and yet there's no plan, no allocation in the budget for any substantial move forward on climate action. I cite Keith Stewart from the World Wildlife Fund and his comments on this budget.

So in fact this item, which is relatively small in the larger scheme of things, is not a substitute for a climate plan.

*Interjection.*

**Mr. Peter Tabuns:** I hear beside me a Liberal member saying that this is a good step. Well, I have to say that 20 years ago it would have been something really



worthwhile. Things have moved on very quickly. In fact, we are facing a situation now that is evolving very rapidly. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change says that we have 10 years within which to take the steps to avoid catastrophic developments on the climate front. Twenty years ago we had a 10-year window to avoid substantial climate change. Well, we blew that. That didn't happen. We now have in this province a government that is satisfied with small steps when what is really needed is substantial action.

I look forward to this bill going to committee. I look forward to hearing the arguments. I look forward to the government bringing forward the evidence from other jurisdictions. I look forward to the concerns of people like the member from Welland being addressed. But for this government in any way, shape or form to say that it is taking adequate action to deal with climate change is simply incorrect and, frankly, something that is an abandonment of its responsibility to the people of this province.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson):** Questions and/or comments?

**Mr. Ernie Hardeman:** I want to commend the member from Toronto—Danforth for the updating, more on the climate change than on the environment part of it, as he's the critic for the Ministry of the Environment. I appreciate that he came in—it's likely not his duty day on Thursday afternoon—to speak to this bill because the government is suggesting that this bill will go a long way to meet climate change targets. I think it's important that the view of that from the opposition is also on the record to show whether it's actually achieving what the government says the bill is going to do. Of course, it really falls in that same category again about, "We know it will, but we're not going to tell you the numbers that told us that."

As was presented by the parliamentary assistant—and it bothers me somewhat: He actually stood up and listed the emissions reductions that we were going to see. He talked about the percentage of trucks that can be converted and put these on with great ado, and he was reading the numbers, the size of the truck they would apply to. I can presume that's all from a regulation that has not yet been written, because it's not in the bill. The only numbers used in the bill are the fines if somebody doesn't comply.

I have pointed out that it's in subsection (8), under "Offence":

"(8) Every person who contravenes or fails to comply with subsection (1), (2), (3), (5) or (7), or a regulation made under this section, is guilty of an offence and on conviction is liable to a fine of not less than \$250 and not more than \$20,000."

**Mr. Mike Colle:** I just want to comment on the member from Toronto—Danforth, and I certainly applaud him in putting in the perspective of the climate change agenda. He's appreciated for doing that.

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I just wanted to say to him that it's a matter of a number of significant initiatives that this government has

taken in this bill. The focus is obviously truck safety and road safety, but there is the climate change part of it.

If you look at what the government has done, we're the first government in Canada to dedicate gas tax money directly to municipalities for public transit. Over \$325 million goes from provincial gas tax, which some of these truckers pay, to public transit. It's never been done before in this province and in this country. We did it. It's helping public transit. That's part of climate change.

We've established one of the world's largest greenbelts, the size of Prince Edward Island, over a million-plus acres. The Environmental Law Society said that it's a world-class, world-renowned greenbelt. That directly affects our climate, because it means you just can't pave all of southern Ontario, from Wasaga to Windsor. The Places to Grow strategy means we've designated where you can build. You can't just sprawl everywhere. That's part of a definitive pro-climate, saving-our-planet agenda that we've not only talked about, but it's in place.

The \$17 billion—not million; billion—in our Move Ontario, the most extensive investment in public transit in North America, is underway right now. We should get that centre line back up to cottage country and everywhere. That's what we are doing now: We're building transit.

**Mr. Jeff Leal:** I listened with great intent to my colleague, the member from Toronto—Danforth. There's no question; he's always been a very thoughtful and articulate spokesperson when it comes to the issues of climate change and a number of issues related to the protection of the environment here in the province of Ontario.

I do note, though, that when it comes to chatting about how this particular initiative will have some impact on the whole issue of climate and air quality, I want to quote from Quentin Chiotti, who's the senior scientist from Pollution Probe: "If you look at truck emissions, they've gone up about 70% over the last 15 years.... So if we can make a dent in that—and this legislation will clearly do that—it's a step forward."

You have to look at, I believe, a number of initiatives over the last four years that are components of our climate change strategy. You look at the introduction, the development and putting in the greenbelt legislation: There's a process in place now to look at consultation with various stakeholders in this particular area to look at expanding the greenbelt, providing an area in the province of Ontario to protect it for future generations. It's been acknowledged by a number of distinguished planning groups in the United States that have given awards to Ontario for the establishment of the greenbelt. We see that as important.

This piece of legislation and other future pieces of legislation which we'll be bringing forward are all part and parcel of our initiative to control GHGs and to really come to grips with this whole climate change issue in Ontario.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson):** We have room for one more question and/or comments.



**Mr. Peter Shurman:** Just a couple of points to my friend from the third party, really in the form of questions.

One of them would be: Will the minister be guaranteeing that there are public hearings to be held in relation to his bill? I think that's one of the major tenets here. The bill doesn't specify an awful lot, so it's more an issue of what isn't there than what is. The assumption that we'll go to committee and get it all regulated is just an assumption, and we know what assuming does.

What is the government's definition—to that point as well—of a commercial vehicle? A commercial vehicle could be defined as anything. It could be a smart car that acts as a courier—and that's not a truck. I want to know if we are talking about 18-wheelers. That, again, is an assumption. We could be talking about minivans; we could be talking about cube vans, buses, school buses, whatever. Why does this legislation not specifically mention calibrating speed limiters to a maximum of no more than 105, rather than leaving it in the nebulous state that it is where you don't have anybody but bureaucrats controlling what that speed might be and if it can vary over time? So I'd like to see, whether it's 105 or something else, some fixed number there.

Also, the issue raised by my colleague the member from Kitchener–Waterloo as well: of whether school buses are defined as commercial vehicles because they fall betwixt and between, and arguably—not even arguably; they do contain what is the most valuable cargo that any vehicle could carry in the province of Ontario or, for that matter, anywhere else.

Will this act in its final form take into consideration practical issues like having the ability to accelerate under certain situations? Those are things that are left unanswered by the bill, things that most members have raised. I look forward to speaking to it as well.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson):** The honourable member for Toronto–Danforth has up to two minutes. No? Further debate?

**Mr. Ernie Hardeman:** I'm pleased to rise and speak on Bill 115, I think it is. Oh no, that was—

*Interjections.*

**Mr. Ernie Hardeman:** That's right. Obviously, the reason that I got the wrong number is because this bill is a photocopy of Bill 115, which was previously introduced by the member from Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock. At that time, it was Bill 115. I just wanted to refer to that for a moment because I think it's rather important that we recognize how we got here.

At that time, it was a private member's bill introduced by a member of the opposition. It got second reading debate, and it got support in the House to be referred to committee for review. Of course, as we know, it goes to committee and then it can have committee hearings, and when the committee refers it back to the House or the government wants to call it back to the House, it would get third and final reading and become law. But the government House leader has to call that bill back to the

House, and we remember, of course, that that didn't happen. This was prior to the election.

I think it's important, too, just for a moment to dwell on when it was passed in the House. In fact, it got a lot of support, but it didn't get the support of some critical votes, I suppose one would say. The parliamentary assistant, who generally would speak on behalf of the minister, expounding the minister's view if the minister wasn't here—for that vote the Minister of Transportation wasn't here, but the parliamentary assistant for transportation was here. The parliamentary assistant, I would presume on behalf of the government and the government position, voted against that private member's bill, because the view would be that the government didn't want that bill.

**Mr. Khalil Ramal:** He's an excellent member; one of the finest members.

*Interjection.*

**Mr. Ernie Hardeman:** Exactly. They voted against it. And the member from London–Fanshawe says, "Well, the reason we voted against it is because it was a private member's bill." To me, that doesn't make sense. That's why we have private members' business. The party one sits—

**Mr. Khalil Ramal:** I didn't say that.

**Mr. Ernie Hardeman:** —the manner under which one sits in this Legislature should have no impact on private members' business. In fact, that's an opportunity for every member in this Legislature to put forward what they believe is the appropriate approach, and then members in this House vote for that and send it to committee. The protection of the party is there when the government has the alternative to call it back for third reading, which of course in this case never happened.

I remember very distinctly. Of course, the House then adjourned and prorogued. We all understand how that works. When the House prorogues, everything on the order paper disappears and falls off the table, so to speak, and that's what happened. Then, as we were leading up to the summer recess—we had prorogued early, I think three weeks early, because the government had nothing more that they deemed to need doing. So we unceremoniously were told on Thursday, "Don't come back on Monday because we have adjourned the proceedings."

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Just leading up to the election, I got a call from my local press that the Minister of Transportation had come out with an announcement—that was, of course, the Minister of Transportation of the previous government, not the present government—that, if re-elected, they would introduce this type of bill. I thought that was a wonderful thing. The press called me, and I said, "I think that's a good idea because I've supported a bill exactly like that in the past. I'm a little concerned, though, and suspicious whether we can actually take their word for it because this bill was before the Legislature, and then the parliamentary assistant, on behalf of the government, voted against it. The government didn't want this bill." I said, "They must have had what you call a bit of a change of heart."



The one thing that I think is important in that change of heart, and the reason I've gone to this length in talking about it, is that the minister, when he announced this bill, said that it was going to save 23% fewer injuries and reduce accidents by 23%—serious, disabling accidents. I think the statistics show not necessarily that we have fewer accidents; they show that we have less severe accidents if the speed limit is kept down. It was going to save 23% of serious injuries.

I think it was in June of last year that my colleague introduced that bill, and here we are debating it. Just stop and think for a moment how many serious accidents could have been saved if the government wanted to do this and was re-elected, and all this time later finally decide they are going to do it. Why not lose some of that, "We want to do it our way," and just accept that somebody else had a good idea? Had they implemented that bill at that time, all those serious injuries—23% of all the serious injuries—could have been avoided. That's taking it from the minister's own statement. If the minister has that type of documentation and that type of information, I'm really concerned as to why we would have taken this approach to have stopped this from being put forward all that time just because, "It wasn't my idea."

Having said that, one cannot live in the past. We must move forward from here. I want to say that I support the principle. I voted for the bill last time and I will support the principles of this bill again. As was mentioned by my good friend Mr. Shurman, there's nothing in this process so far on anything we've heard from the government side that the government is even prepared to hold public hearings on this. I'd like some kind of commitment that that's what's going to happen when we finish debate on it for second reading. I would hope that, as we do the rotation, some of the members from the government side would point out that yes, when we get through with the debate on second reading, the bill will be going for third reading. So I'm looking forward to that.

I want to talk a little bit about the bill and what it doesn't do.

**Hon. David Caplan:** You haven't done that yet.

**Mr. Ernie Hardeman:** Yes, I've talked about it extensively. The Minister of Infrastructure Renewal says I haven't talked about the bill, but I want to say that one doesn't need a lot of time to talk about the bill, because the bill doesn't have a lot to talk about. The bill is totally an enabling bill for the minister to have a regime of defining who they're going to regulate and deciding how they're going to regulate them. The only thing the bill does is impose the penalty if people don't listen.

*Interjection.*

**Mr. Ernie Hardeman:** That's right. Hit them with a hammer if they don't listen.

I think the issue of what it does is important on the bill. Going back to the two main ones, there is nothing in this bill that talks about the speed that they will be limited to. I think the minister can, by his or her choice, make that decision on what they're going to set the speed at. Is it going to be 90, 95, 105 or 115? They can set it wherever they want.

The second and, I think, more critical part—and the parliamentary assistant did read from a sheet of paper that I presume is a draft regulation; I don't know that. But he read what a "commercial vehicle" was going to be. But there's nothing in the bill, other than saying that the minister can define a commercial vehicle. It just says that he can, by regulation, define "motor vehicle" for the purpose of this act. So in fact he can define a commercial motor vehicle. It may be motor homes; it may be cube vans—I suppose one could say that a taxicab is a commercial vehicle. There is nothing in there that would prohibit that type of regulation.

The other thing on the speed part is clause 68.1(11)(f) of the bill. It says that the minister can make regulations "prescribing the speed for the purpose of subsection (9)." So there is—

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson):** Thank you. Perhaps the honourable member can conclude when he gets his two-minute response. Questions and/or comments?

**Mr. Peter Shurman:** I'd like to thank my colleague the member from Oxford for some interesting comments, one of them being his pointing out that Bill 115 died an untimely death, when you consider that it was a valid bill as a private member's bill and has since returned in another form now called Bill 41, both bills having merit. It's just sad that something that seems to be somewhat universal in the House has been delayed as a result of the fact that it was private members' business and has come back to us a couple of years later as government business. I might say that it's a shame that good legislation is often lost that way, especially coming to this House as I do, being a relatively new member.

That said, the bill itself, with some specifics, has the makings of very valid legislation. Given the fact that those specifics are defined over the fullness of time, undoubtedly it will pass, and we'll wind up with a safer Ontario as a result.

I would like to underscore my prior reservations, though, which my friend seems to share; to wit, the importance of hearing from the most affected stakeholders, and they are the truckers themselves, the trucking industry as a whole. These happen to be great corporate citizens and terrific independent business people. They already do an awful lot of what the legislation intends for them to do on their own.

I'm quoting now from the Ontario Trucking Association statistics that I have. It's a fact that 55% to 60% of trucks on the road are already under the control of governors—the name for these speed controllers—voluntarily, and the speeds on them range from anywhere between 90 to 110 kilometres per hour. As a point of fact, the European Union adopted speed limiter legislation well over a decade ago. It's high time we did, but as I've mentioned and as my friend from Oxford has said, it has to be done with the appropriate regulatory balances.

**Mr. Ted Chudleigh:** Apparently the government is speechless on this issue. A couple of speakers ago, we started asking some questions where we asked the government if they would respond. Since that time, no



government member has been on their feet. Apparently, there are some questions that they would rather not answer.

We asked whether there would be hearings on this bill, which is a very legitimate question. There are a great number of independent business people in the province of Ontario who are going to be affected by this legislation. The member for Oxford brought it to the attention of the government. Will there be hearings on this bill, and where will those hearings take place?

As I pointed out at the end of my comments on the bill, the conditions that truckers face across this province vary tremendously. They are far different in eastern Ontario, where many truckers use two-lane highways and have an entirely different set of circumstances to deal with as they're travelling to the towns and villages of eastern Ontario.

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In northern Ontario they're using two- and three- and four-lane highways, and there are often long hauls involved in northern Ontario between cities and towns. How are they affected by this legislation?

Of course, in southwestern Ontario there's a different situation again from what we find in the GTA or the Golden Horseshoe, down into the Niagara Peninsula. Given the difference in the way this bill will impact the people who live in those different parts of the province, I think it would be a condition of the government that they would want to hold hearings in each of those areas to make sure that what they did in this bill wasn't misrepresented or misconstrued and that we got it right the first time we put past this legislation.

**Mr. Michael A. Brown:** Heard enough? I just wanted to help them a bit. Two hundred eighty thousand tonnes of greenhouse gas emissions will be eliminated by the speed limiter bill. The size of the truck is 11,794 kilograms. Above that, you will need to have the speed limiter.

I represent Manitoulin Island as part of my constituency. Doug Smith founded Manitoulin Transport, one of the 10 largest trucking firms in all of Canada, operated from Gore Bay. His trucks have been limited to 90 kilometres per hour by speed limiters for a great length of time. He's telling us, as is OTA president David Bradley—who himself wants it to be clear that he's not related to Jim Bradley—that he's firmly in support of this measure. We know that it is a government commitment that this will go to committee.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson):** We do have room for one more round of questions and/or comments.

*Interjection.*

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson):** That member has already spoken. Nice try. The honourable member for Oxford has two minutes to respond.

**Mr. Ernie Hardeman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I want to thank all the members who spoke in the questions and comments, particularly my two colleagues on our side of the House and the parliamentary assistant, for bringing forward some of the information that was requested.

I think it's so important that we had that as part of this debate. Obviously, if we have questions and comments, it seems important that if you have questions, someone would make an effort to answer them. In the length of time I've sat here, it's always been understood that question period was the time that should happen: when the opposition has questions, that that's when you would get the answers. I appreciate the parliamentary assistant. He decided to actually deliver that answer when somebody asked a question. So, thank you very much for that.

I do think it's very important, as I mentioned in my presentation, that we have those public hearings—the parliamentary assistant didn't answer that question—to make sure that we were going to have them. I think it's so important that there is a group of people—a large number of people who are not involved and are not members of the Ontario Trucking Association—that has some comments and some real concerns about this legislation. I think we as legislators have an obligation to hear from them, as we move forward with this legislation, why they think it will not do what it should be doing for the trucking industry, in combination with what it will do for our environment.

I thank him very much for putting that forward, and I do hope he takes that concern back to the minister as they come to the decision of how much and when we're going to have public hearings after second reading of this bill. I think that's a very important part of this bill.

The other thing that I think is important is that we actually have those numbers that the parliamentary assistant has been reading, what will be defined as a commercial vehicle. I think that—

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson):** I thank the honourable member for his contribution to the debate. Further debate?

**Mr. Peter Shurman:** The thing that first hit me when I took a look at the draft bill was that this is about shared highways. The highways everywhere are not just for trucks, albeit that's an important aspect of what uses those roads; they're for everybody.

The best example I could recall of my first acquaintance with 400-series highways in the province of Ontario was back before I moved to Ontario 25 years ago, when my now almost 34-year-old son was a one-year-old and regulations weren't what they are today. During a trip from my native Montreal, in a low-slung sports car with no back seat, no child restraints, no place other than buckled in with my wife in the right-hand seat for young Michael to sit, he stood and watched the traffic go by. What he saw came out through the limited vocabulary of a one-year-old; what he was saying was, "Big truck. Big truck. Big truck." I could go on for a while, because he did, for about six hours. And what he did was enlighten me for a debate I never knew I'd be part of, 25 or 30 years later, in terms of making me aware of what is the primary traffic on the 401 and the other 400-series highways here in Ontario.

My history of the 401 goes back even further than that. The 401 was built in 1960; it's the spine of the province of Ontario, and, as my friend from Halton



pointed out, at that time a 70-mile-per-hour road, which, in equivalency terms today, runs somewhere between 115 and 120 kilometres an hour, at a time when cars were not built and trucks were not built the way they are today in terms of safety.

With that in mind, I'd like to record the fact that I support this bill. The Progressive Conservative caucus indeed supported this bill back when it was initially introduced in the Legislature in 2006 as a private member's bill, put forward by my colleague the member from Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock. This bill is almost identical to the one that was tabled then, and if this bill is deserving of government support now, I've got to say that it certainly was deserving of government support back in 2006.

What, I'm asking myself, caused the change of spirit in the government? I'm guessing that somebody must have been blinded by the light. It was not a good idea then, ostensibly, but it is a good idea now. Nevertheless, let's just sum it up with, "Better late than never."

There are many, many issues of practical concern that have to be addressed specifically by the Minister of Transportation as this bill moves forward, and it undoubtedly will. I've mentioned some of them before; I'd like to be very specific on them now. The for-instances include whether or not this minister will guarantee that there will be public hearings held in relation to the bill.

This is not just about the guy and his rig, referring to an 18-wheeler; this is about corporate trucking, a major aspect of industry here in Ontario. It's about independent truckers. It is about large commercial vehicles, because commercial vehicles, as has been pointed out by many of the speakers today, are not defined. It's about rental vehicles, rental trucks. It's about foreign vehicles that don't necessarily have their licences from the province of Ontario and the monitoring and infrastructure for that monitoring that has to go into that.

What exactly is the government's definition of a "commercial motor vehicle"? I've mentioned that it could be the 18-wheel rigs. It could also be buses, it could be vans, it could be courier vehicles, and it could be private cars that are used for commercial purposes. There are many things that are easily defined as commercial motor vehicles.

Why does this legislation not specifically mention calibrating speed limiters to a maximum of 105 kilometres per hour? That's what seems to be the number that people are fixated on, and it seems to be the appropriate speed. It seems to be the speed where governors or speed limiters have been put on vehicles voluntarily by the trucking industry, and that's 55% to 60% already. They are set for somewhere between 90 and 110 kilometres per hour. That, roughly, comes out to about 105 kilometres per hour. The European Union, as I mentioned earlier, has adopted speed limiter legislation, and many carriers at this point already govern their fleets at or below 105 kilometres per hour.

The Ontario Trucking Association also predicts a number of other things—benefits including a reduction of as much as 140 kilotonnes of greenhouse gas, which is 140,000 tonnes—280,000 pounds—of emissions that go into the air. It talks about less severe car-truck collisions, and it talks about less tailgating and improper lane changes.

I could go on for some time about what's happening on our roads. Suffice to say that I will, under circumstances, support this bill, as will the PC caucus, but we need the regulation inherent in it.

*Second reading debate deemed adjourned.*

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson):** I thank the honourable member for his contribution to the debate.

It being 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until next Monday, April 21, at 1:30 p.m.

*The House adjourned at 1801.*

**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO**  
**ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO**

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Bisson, Gilles (ND)	Timmins–James Bay / Timmins–Baie James	
<b>Bradley, Hon. / L'hon. James J. (L)</b>	St. Catharines	Minister of Transportation / ministre des Transports
Broten, Laurel C. (L)	Etobicoke–Lakeshore	
Brown, Michael A. (L)	Algoma–Manitoulin	
Brownell, Jim (L)	Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry	
<b>Bryant, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (L)</b>	St. Paul's	Minister of Aboriginal Affairs, government House leader / ministre des Affaires autochtones, leader parlementaire du gouvernement
<b>Cansfield, Hon. / L'hon. Donna H. (L)</b>	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	Minister of Natural Resources / ministre des Richesses naturelles
<b>Caplan, Hon. / L'hon. David (L)</b>	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal / ministre du Renouvellement de l'infrastructure publique
<b>Carroll, Hon. / L'hon. M. Aileen (L)</b>	Barrie	Minister of Culture, minister responsible for seniors / ministre de la Culture, ministre déléguée aux Affaires des personnes âgées
<b>Chan, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (L)</b>	Markham–Unionville	Minister of Citizenship and Immigration / ministre des Affaires civiques et de l'Immigration
Chudleigh, Ted (PC)	Halton	
Colle, Mike (L)	Eglinton–Lawrence	
Craitor, Kim (L)	Niagara Falls	
<b>Crozier, Bruce (L)</b>	Essex	Deputy Speaker, Chair of the committee of the whole House / Vice- Président, Président du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Delaney, Bob (L)	Mississauga–Streetsville	
Phillon, Vic (L)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Dickson, Joe (L)	Ajax–Pickering	
DiNovo, Cheri (ND)	Parkdale–High Park	
<b>Jombrowsky, Hon. / L'hon. Leona (L)</b>	Prince Edward–Hastings	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales
<b>Juguid, Hon. / L'hon. Brad (L)</b>	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	Minister of Labour / ministre du Travail
<b>Juncan, Hon. / L'hon. Dwight (L)</b>	Windsor–Tecumseh	Minister of Finance, Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / ministre des Finances, président du Conseil de gestion du gouvernement
Dunlop, Garfield (PC)	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	
Illiot, Christine (PC)	Whitby–Oshawa	



Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Flynn, Kevin Daniel (L)	Oakville	
<b>Fonseca, Hon. / L'hon. Peter</b> (L)	Mississauga East–Cooksville / Mississauga-Est–Cooksville	Minister of Tourism / ministre du Tourisme
Gélinas, France (ND)	Nickel Belt	
<b>Gerretsen, Hon. / L'hon. John</b> (L)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les Îles	Minister of the Environment / ministre de l'Environnement
<b>Gravelle, Hon. / L'hon. Michael</b> (L)	Thunder Bay–Superior North / Thunder Bay–Superior-Nord	Minister of Northern Development and Mines / ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
Hampton, Howard (ND)	Kenora–Rainy River	Leader of the New Democratic Party / chef du Nouveau Parti démocratique
Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	
Hillier, Randy (PC)	Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington	
<b>Horwath, Andrea</b> (ND)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	Third Deputy Chair of the committee of the whole House / Troisième Vice-Présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Hoy, Pat (L)	Chatham–Kent–Essex	
Hudak, Tim (PC)	Niagara West–Glanbrook / Niagara-Ouest–Glanbrook	
Jaczek, Helena (L)	Oak Ridges–Markham	
Jeffrey, Linda (L)	Brampton–Springdale	
Jones, Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin–Caledon	
Klees, Frank (PC)	Newmarket–Aurora	
Kormos, Peter (ND)	Welland	New Democratic Party House leader / leader parlementaire du Nouveau Parti démocratique
Kular, Kuldip (L)	Bramalea–Gore–Malton	
Kwinter, Monte (L)	York Centre / York-Centre	
Lalonde, Jean-Marc (L)	Glengarry–Prescott–Russell	
Leal, Jeff (L)	Peterborough	
Levac, Dave (L)	Brant	
MacLeod, Lisa (PC)	Nepean–Carleton	
Mangat, Amrit (L)	Mississauga–Brampton South / Mississauga–Brampton-Sud	
Marchese, Rosario (ND)	Trinity–Spadina	
Martiniuk, Gerry (PC)	Cambridge	
<b>Matthews, Hon. / L'hon. Deborah</b> (L)	London North Centre / London-Centre-Nord	Minister of Children and Youth Services, minister responsible for women's issues / ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse, ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
Mauro, Bill (L)	Thunder Bay–Atikokan	
<b>McGuinty, Hon. / L'hon. Dalton</b> (L)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	Premier and President of the Council, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / premier ministre et président du Conseil, ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales
<b>McMeekin, Hon. / L'hon. Ted</b> (L)	Ancaster–Dundas– Flamborough–Westdale	Minister of Government and Consumer Services / ministre des Services gouvernementaux et des Services aux consommateurs
McNeely, Phil (L)	Ottawa–Orléans	
<b>Meilleur, Hon. / L'hon. Madeleine</b> (L)	Ottawa–Vanier	Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for francophone affairs / ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires, ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones
Miller, Norm (PC)	Parry Sound–Muskoka	
Miller, Paul (ND)	Hamilton East–Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est–Stoney Creek	
<b>Milloy, Hon. / L'hon. John</b> (L)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
Mitchell, Carol (L)	Huron–Bruce	
Moridi, Reza (L)	Richmond Hill	
Munro, Julia (PC)	York–Simcoe	
Murdoch, Bill (PC)	Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound	
Naqvi, Yasir (L)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	
O'Toole, John (PC)	Durham	
Orazietti, David (L)	Sault Ste. Marie	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Dueltte, Jerry J. (PC)	Oshawa	
endergast, Leeanna (L)	Kitchener-Conestoga	
Peters, Hon. / L'hon. Steve (L)	Elgin-Middlesex-London	Speaker / Président
Phillips, Hon. / L'hon. Gerry (L)	Scarborough-Agincourt	Minister of Energy / ministre de l'Énergie
Prie, Michael (ND)	Beaches-East York	
Pupatello, Hon. / L'hon. Sandra (L)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	Minister of Economic Development and Trade / ministre du Développement économique et du Commerce
Qaadri, Shafiq (L)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	
Ramall, Khalil (L)	London-Fanshawe	
Ramsay, David (L)	Timiskaming-Cochrane	
Rinaldi, Lou (L)	Northumberland-Quinte West	
Runciman, Robert W. (PC)	Leeds-Grenville	Leader of the Official Opposition, Opposition House leader / Chef de l'opposition officielle, leader parlementaire de l'opposition
Ruprecht, Tony (L)	Davenport	
Sandals, Liz (L)	Guelph	
Savoline, Joyce (PC)	Burlington	
Scott, Laurie (PC)	Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock	
Sergio, Mario (L)	York West / York-Ouest	
Shurman, Peter (PC)	Thornhill	
Smith, Hon. / L'hon. Monique M. (L)	Nipissing	Minister of Revenue / ministre du Revenu
Smitherman, Hon. / L'hon. George (L)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	Deputy Premier, Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / vice-premier ministre, ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Sorbara, Greg (L)	Vaughan	
Sousa, Charles (L)	Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud	
Stirling, Norman W. (PC)	Carleton-Mississippi Mills	
Tabuns, Peter (ND)	Toronto-Danforth	
Takhar, Hon. / L'hon. Harinder S. (L)	Mississauga-Erindale	Minister of Small Business and Entrepreneurship / ministre des Petites Entreprises et de l'Entrepreneuriat
Van Bommel, Maria (L)	Lambton-Kent-Middlesex	
Watson, Hon. / L'hon. Jim (L)	Ottawa West-Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest-Nepean	Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Wilkinson, Hon. / L'hon. John (L)	Perth-Wellington	Minister of Research and Innovation / ministre de la Recherche et de l'Innovation
Wilson, Jim (PC)	Simcoe-Grey	Second Deputy Chair of the committee of the whole House / Deuxième Vice-Président du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Witmer, Elizabeth (PC)	Kitchener-Waterloo	
Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (L)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Minister of Education / ministre de l'Éducation
Zakabuski, John (PC)	Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke	
Zimmer, David (L)	Willowdale	



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Règlements et projets de loi d'intérêt privé**

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Michael Prue, Tony Ruprecht, Mario Sergio  
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Helena Jaczek, Dave Levac, Shafiq Qaadri,  
Khalil Ramal, Laurie Scott, Peter Shurman  
Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch





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